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Little Joy.—Frontispiece.



"I wonder if the Zionland will be any better than this?"
murmured Joy, with a dreamy smile. p. 22.

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HOW THE KINGDOM CAME

TO

LITTLE JOY.



“Child ('tis the Master's voice),
Make thou thy heart for me
A dwelling-place.”

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✓ AMERICAN SUNDAY-SCHOOL UNION,
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LITTLE JOY.

CHAPTER I.

JOY'S QUESTION.

“Know ye that better land?”

T the foot of a small back-yard ran a broad deep river in which lay embedded a long narrow island. Yellow fields of waving broomcorn covered all the centre of the island, but just at the water's edge was a wild bit of ground grown full of reeds and cat-tails and alder bushes and wild thorns; stunted willows too, whose long, pliant branches bent over into the cool, dark water under the shadow of the bank, as if fishing for the little minnows as they shot out into the warm sunshine. Beyond the river was a long stretch of meadows

and broomcorn flats, rising gradually into low distant hills, among whose purple shadows the sunbeams played hide and seek, from early sunrise to sunset, through the long golden autumn days.

On the low back doorstep leading down into the yard sat a little girl intent upon the frontispiece of a book which lay open on her knee, the sun pouring down a whole shower of bright beams upon her light yellow hair, on a little crutch lying at rest by her side, and all over the old brown house at her back.

The picture she studied was that of a man clothed in rags, a book in his hand and a great bundle on his back. His face wore an expression of distress and terror; his back was turned toward the house, in whose doorway were collected his wife and children; his eyes were raised and fixed with eager longing upon the shadowy outlines of a distant cloudy city. Beneath, in large letters, were printed the words :

FLY FROM THE WRATH TO COME.

The little face bent over this scene was very sober and troubled, and one or two soft sighs of mingled doubt and regret bore witness to

the struggle going on in the childish breast. Once she murmured in a low tone :

"I s'pose it would be better to start right off. The book man said it was not safe to be waiting for other folks. But oh dear ! if Darry would only not take so long to make up his mind ! I'm most afraid to go alone."

She raised a pair of soft, thoughtful brown eyes, and sent an exploring glance across the sunny landscape, then, with her head thrown back and her chin high in the air, stared right up into the deep blue sky above, where a flock of fleecy cloud-sheep were skimming along, chased by a warm, gentle breeze.

"There must be a road up there somewhere, but I do not know how to find it. The book man said we must ask, but nobody seems to know."

The tiny cloud floated noiselessly by, and the deep blue sky smiled silently down at the little earnest face : they were so far away, so very high above the upturned eyes ; and yet, as she looked steadfastly into those pure, soft depths, a sweet, tender expression spread itself over the child's pale, delicate features. It was as if a lovely vision of that far-away land had disclosed itself to her searching gaze.

She began to sing softly in a fresh, childish way :

“ Beautiful Zion built above,
Beautiful city that I love,
Beautiful gates of pearly white,
Beautiful temple, God its light;
He who was slain on Calvary
Opens those pearly gates to me.”

She was still again for a little while.

“ Yes,” she murmured, at last, in a low tone, as if speaking in a dream, “ I can see the shadows of the trees and the white angels walking about the street; it almost seems as if I can catch the children’s voices singing ‘ Glory, glory, glory,’ and hear them calling me to make haste lest the gates should be shut before I start.”

Was it only a child’s vivid imagination peopling the clouds with fanciful images, or was it the spirit-eyes of the soul piercing through the veil of sense into the unseen world beyond?

“ What are you doing, Joy? Do you see anything in the sky?”

The child quickly dropped her chin to its usual position with a little start, and brought her eyes to bear on the pleasant, rosy-cheeked

face of a young woman who stood in the doorway.

"I'm thinking, Lindy," she said, in a slow, dreamy way. "Do you want me?"

"There's no one to take Darry his dinner unless you will, Joy," said the woman, with a doubtful glance from the little crutch to the child's pale face. "He went off in such a hurry this morning that he forgot it. The pail is not very heavy."

"I suppose I can go," said Joy, in a sober, thoughtful tone; "only," she added, with a wise little shake of her head, "I do not know where the new railway is."

"Oh, that's no matter," replied her sister-in-law, with a look of relief. "Just go straight along the plank-road till you come to the mill where the road turns off. Any one there can tell you."

"Well," said Joy, taking up the crutch with a little sigh, "I'll go and try."

The young woman went back into the house. Joy's eyes wandered off again to what lay outside the door—only for a moment, however—then she slowly rose and prepared to follow. As she did so the use of the little crutch became apparent: one limb was so much shorter

than the other that in walking the slight figure swayed unsteadily and required some such support.

The child stepped into an entry, and taking down an old straw hat from a nail, pushed open a door into what seemed the common living-room.

A table, chairs, and a small cooking-stove filled the front end, while on a bed in the background a stout, healthy-looking baby lay lustily kicking and crowing. The furniture, though plain and rather scanty, was good of its kind; the small glass windows shone, and the floor and woodwork were very clean and well painted; everything about the room had a tidy, thrifty aspect.

Joy limped up to the table and stood silently by while Lindy prepared huge slices of bread and meat, and then packed them nicely in a bright tin pail with two or three apple turnovers and some generous pieces of fresh yellow cheese.

“There! I’ve put in enough dinner for you both. Now, if you take a fancy to stay about picking up chestnuts or gathering wild flowers until Darry comes home, there’s nothing to hinder. It will do you good to play out in

the woods a bit. So much thinking is not good for you."

The little girl's eyes brightened; she only nodded gravely, without a word. But as she limped off slowly toward the door a sudden thought struck her, and she stopped short on the threshold to look back and ask abruptly,

"Lindy, how far off is 'Beautiful Zion' from here?"

The young woman's pleasant look vanished. "Mercy on us, child! how you do harp on that nonsense! No one knows till they get there, I suppose."

"But what should you think was the way?" persisted the little lame girl.

"I do not think anything about it one way or another," answered she, dryly.

"I know one thing I do wish," she muttered to herself as Joy closed the door,—“that those book-agents would mind their own business at home, and not go tramping around the country putting such notions into children's heads.”

Joy went slowly down the front steps into the street. The house stood on a slight rise of ground in the very outskirts of the town; just beyond, a canal bridge led out into the

open country. There were plenty more just such dingy tenement-houses on the city side, and a whole row opposite, but between Joy's home and the canal was only a blacksmith's forge, where the farmers stopped very often to have their horses shod.

There were no wagons in front at this moment. Joy paused at the open door and looked in. The bare-armed, sooty-faced smith was hard at work, and a shower of bright sparks was flying upward under the quick, steady blows of his heavy hammer upon the glowing iron.

As the little girl's shadow darkened the doorway he glanced up and nodded good-naturedly.

"How do you do, Joy? Are you come to pay me a visit?"

"Not now, Mr. Blacksmith; I'm carrying Darry his dinner. Please, will you tell me the way to Zion?"

The man dropped his hammer and eyed the little questioner with mingled surprise and embarrassment.

Something in the grave face so earnest and eager checked the light answer on his tongue and sobered his own sooty face.

"I don't just know it rightly myself, child, more's the shame. Why not ask the Sunday-school folk? They'll tell you."

"Where do the Sunday-school folk live?" asked Joy, gravely.

"All over, I'm thinking," answered the blacksmith, with a short, uneasy laugh, and then the sparks flew faster than ever under the energetic movements of his powerful arm.

"They did not live at the mines, unless the book man was one," murmured Joy as she crossed the bridge and went down the road leading to the mill.

The trees were gay in their bright fall dress. A golden mist shone over the broad landscape, where all sorts of warm autumnal tints were blended together in one harmonious whole. Overhead great flocks of black crows whirled past, caw, cawing that summer was gone, and once a little bird flew up into the very tip top of a roadside tree and sang so long and sweetly that Joy stood still right in the middle of the road to listen, although she could not understand a single note.

The mill was a small settlement, with its owner's large white house, barns, other out-

houses, and a half a dozen labourers' cottages, running up the long hill at whose foot it was situated. Near the deep, clear pool of water, whose banks were high on two sides, throwing broad shadows clear across, stood a picturesque old sawmill, and there was a constant cool splashing of water as the wheel turned. On the opposite side of the road were bars leading into a broad, green meadow, and in the meadow were a great many red and black and white cows grazing.

At the door of the mill stood the miller in his white hat and flour-sprinkled garments. He was staring listlessly down the road, as if on the watch for customers.

"I wonder if he is one of the Sunday-school folk?" said little Joy to herself.

The miller bestowed an indifferent glance on the faded calico frock and old straw hat as their owner drew nearer and nearer and finally stopped.

"Please, sir, where's the new railroad?" asked the child, with as much of a curtsy as the crutch would allow.

"Take the bars down and step into that meadow yonder, and be careful to steer clear of the marsh. If you keep on close to the

hill, you'll hear the men at work before you get there."

Joy thought of her other question, but his face was not encouraging, so she gave a little sigh, and putting her pail on the grass, with some difficulty she managed to let down the bars and pass through to the other side. They were heavy and not easy to replace, but the miller did not offer to help, only watched her slow, awkward efforts with a slight disagreeable smile.

"Dear me!" said the little girl to herself, with another sigh, as she again took up the pail; "I hope there are not many such persons on the road to Zion, 'cause, if there are, it would be better to wait for Darry to help me along. I wonder why everybody cannot be pleasant? It's so much nicer."

A well-worn footpath ran across the grass under the shadow of the bank, so Joy knew that must be the road, and went on more slowly than before, singing softly to rest herself:

"Come to that happy land,
Come, come away:
Why will ye doubting stand,
Why long delay?"

Oh, we shall happy be,
When, from sin and sorrow free,
Lord, we shall dwell with thee,
Blest, blest for aye."

"I wish I could remember the rest," said Joy, coming to a sudden stop. "It was such a beautiful song."

The crickets jumped about under foot, the birds kept up an incessant chirping overhead, a squirrel sat on a stone by the side of the path nibbling at a nut, with his tail high up in the air. He looked so earnestly at Joy that she gave him a nod of encouragement, but as soon as she came near the squirrel ran away. Joy went quietly on, breathing in long draughts of the fresh, sweet country air, and alternately watching the sunbeams chase the shadows along the path before her and the white cloudlets in the fair blue sky above. Soon the hum of men's voices and the heavy fall of earth warned her she was drawing near the working-ground. A moment later, she stood at the entrance of a long narrow passage, which was to open a way through half a mile of sandhill to the valley on the opposite side.

Joy came to a stand, and surveyed the

busy scene with mingled astonishment and interest.

One detachment of men, halfway up the perpendicular bank, hard at work, looked in the distance, with their red shirts and diminutive forms, more like a band of monkeys than full-grown men.

Darry belonged to the lower band of workmen. So soon as he caught sight of his little sister standing in the opening, he threw down his spade and came toward her, looking very red and warm. His face was a good steady one, sunburnt and freckled, but full of intelligence and pleasantness.

"Here's your dinner, Darry," said Joy, holding out the tin pail as the explanation of her presence. "And Lindy said I was to wait and take mine too."


The young man nodded good-humouredly: "All right, little woman. We'll stop work now in about twenty minutes, and then I'll come. If you climb up the bank under those pine trees yonder, you'll be out of the way of the carts, and can watch us work better."

Darry ran back to his place, and his sister, hanging the pail on her arm, slowly worked her way up the shady slope.

CHAPTER II.

THE SLOUGH IN THE MEADOW.

“A clue is in my hand
Thro’ earth’s labyrinth to guide me
To that far-off heavenly land.”

 HE bank up which Joy had climbed was crowned with a wood where trees of great size and beauty had been growing for many years. Down its sloping sides groups of outposts were scattered here and there, the boughs arching and mingling high overhead, and stretching upward toward the thicker portion, like the long side aisles of some grand cathedral. Huge moss-grown boulders were scattered around, too, serving the purpose of seats, and pine knots lay thick over the ground, while patches of green and gray and crisp red-capped moss formed a soft, beautiful carpet under the leafy canopy. Here was an old stump of a tree, all festooned with bramble

and ivy, and there a tiny hollow lined with velvety green, strewn with delicate ferns and bright-colored autumn leaves.

Joy went slowly on and up until she found a seat that just suited her,—an old tree bole which had fallen sideways, with cushions of green moss at its foot and back and a light hemlock screen overhead. It was a pretty place to wait in, at once shady and sunny, for the sun was there before her, scattering his rays all around, dancing over the rustic arm-chair, and bringing to light all the acorns and sticks and snail-shells hidden among the moss. It commanded, besides, a fine view of the whole surrounding country, and she could look right down the passage Darry was helping to dig.

Weary with her long walk, the little girl set down the pail on top of a smooth, flat rock she thought would just answer for a table when wanted, and throwing down her crutch, half reclined against the sloping bank, with her face upturned to the sky and her eyes opening and closing with the fitful play of the light and shade upon the half-closed lids. None of the discordant din and turmoil of the distant city, whose tall spires and smoking factory chim-

neys could be plainly seen at that elevation ; only a soft, sweet, almost solemn stir of wood sounds and the ceaseless hum of insect-life. Now and then a faint, indistinct murmur of men's voices came up from below, but otherwise nothing was to be heard except the drop, drop of nuts, the rustling of the branches as the squirrels ran to and fro collecting their winter store, or the occasional low, sweet note of a bird in the trees overhead.

Joy leaned back and listened with a feeling of dreamy content and languor to the incessant, ocean-like song of the pines, every gentle breath of wind bringing down a delicious aromatic perfume as it played caressingly with the child's light yellow locks and cooled her heated temples.

"I wonder if the Zion-land will be any better than this?" murmured Joy, with a dreamy smile. "Only, the book man said I wouldn't be lame any more, nor tired, nor hungry, nor sick ; and there would be no winter."

Until within the past few months all Joy could remember of her short life had been passed in a wild, godless mining region of the Far West. No portion of heathendom on the other side of the ocean could have been more

destitute of Christian creed and ordinances. Her brother had taught her to read and cipher, but her first religious notions, vague and imperfect as they still were, dated back to the short memorable visit of an itinerant missionary and his evening conversations with Darry during the week he had been an inmate of their rude log cottage.

He had found Joy an eager, willing pupil, especially when he taught her two or three simple Sunday-school hymns, and talked to her of the Lord Jesus and the beautiful home he was preparing for all his followers in the celestial country above. As in the case of a certain woman of Thyatira, "the Lord opened her heart that she attended unto the things spoken."

But the missionary's stay had been short. Darry had with difficulty protected him, during those few days, from the lawless violence of the other miners, and this bold defence of his guest against their ill-treatment and angry threats had made it necessary for the family to seek another home. The little girl's ideas were a curious mixture of truth and fiction. "Beautiful Zion" was only another, safer, and far happier earthly home, and the spiritual pil-

grimage a foot-journey which even a child was urged and commanded to make.

This idea had been much strengthened by the delighted perusal of Pilgrim's Progress, the missionary's parting gift to Darry. Day after day the necessity for an early start, even if she should be obliged to make the journey alone, had been a growing conviction in her childish mind. But as she lay there thinking the matter over, she determined to make one more effort to induce her brother to join her; if that failed, then, let what might come, she would start off alone that very afternoon, instead of returning home.

She lay quite still, half awake, half dreaming, she hardly knew which, until a firm, quick step on the rustling leaves caused her to spring up and begin to set the rock table, using half a dozen bright red sumach leaves for dishes.

"See, Darry, what a nice chair and table I have found!" she exclaimed, gleefully pointing them out as he drew near. "Now we can play picnic together, as I used to do with Fanny and Dick in the woods near the mines."

The young man smiled, and sitting down

in the moss-cushioned seat, drew his sister to his knee.

"Are you not very tired?" he asked, with an anxious glance at the child's white cheeks, from which the glow of exercise had quite faded. "I should have gone without any dinner, to make me remember not to be so careless again."

"Oh no, Darry, I liked to come," said Joy, earnestly. "It's ever so much prettier here than in the mine woods."

"Then you are not sorry we had to leave there?"

"No, indeed, Darry!" and Joy shook her head very decidedly. "Only, I'd like to see my book man again."

A little cloud came over her brother's face, but he remained silent.

"He said he 'spected to meet us both by and by in the beautiful land up in the skies, but I'm 'fraid he'll get tired waiting if we don't start soon."

An involuntary contraction of the brow was the only sign that the young man heard as he stared soberly down into the sand gorge below with a troubled, preoccupied air, not unusual with him of late.

Joy eyed him anxiously, hesitating how far it was safe to venture.

"Darry," she said, at last, in a low, half-frightened tone, "don't you mean to start soon? You know you almost promised the book man you would, and I'm so tired waiting."

The young man turned and met the child's wistful eyes.

"You need not wait for me, little woman," he said, not unkindly.

"But, Darry," said Joy, almost tearfully, "it would be much nicer to go together."

Her brother hesitated.

"The way is all blocked up," he said, at length, in a tone of suppressed feeling.

"But, Darry—"

"Well, what then, child?"

"The man said to take the first step, and keep asking, and we'd be sure to come out right."

"The first step would take the bread and butter out of all your mouths," murmured Darry, with some bitterness.

Joy opened her eyes in great surprise, but her brother added no word of explanation. He reached out his hand for a slice of bread

and meat, which he disposed of with the air of a man who did not at all know what he was eating.

Something in his expression shut Joy's mouth. She ventured no further remonstrance. Should she give up all idea of the journey Zionward, or start off by herself?

"Why don't you eat your dinner?" demanded her brother, suddenly.

Joy took a turnover and nibbled at it with a very dissatisfied face.

The birds fluttered about, giving once in a while a soft chirp of impatience at the crumbs falling too near Joy's feet for their content. Joy's restless eyes ran along a sunbeam path to a bit of bright hillside, where the sky and earth seemed to meet. A new idea struck her; she fancied she could see the outlines of misty, pearly-white gates just above those low, purple hills.

Darry was deep in a fit of troubled thought; there was a frequent contraction of his bushy eyebrows, and the lips were very tightly pressed together. Joy glanced at him wistfully once or twice. Should she tell him she had at length found the road? But when she looked again, the cloud-gates

had entirely vanished. No! a better way would be to go alone first, then, when sure, return and act as guide to the rest of the family.

She took a careful survey of the country lying between her present position and those distant hills. It was mostly broad meadow lands and broomcorn flats, with a few farm-houses scattered here and there; crossing the canal and river would be the only serious difficulty.

"Mr. Goodwill's wicket-gate and the house Beautiful must be somewhere along the road," thought the child as she turned over the pros and cons in her mind, "and if I want anything to eat, why, there's my ten-cent piece to pay for it."

And pulling at a black string tied around her neck, she drew out from the bosom of her dress a bright silver bit, which she eyed with great complacency.

"That will go ever so far! But I'll fill my pail with nuts beforehand, so as to be sure."

A little sigh she could not quite repress roused Darry: shaking off his own troublesome thoughts, he said cheerfully:

"Well, what have you been thinking about?"

This has not been a very lively picnic so far, has it? Suppose you and I go chestnutting until the horn sounds? There are some famous trees over there."

Joy's face brightened perceptibly.

"Darry," she said, abruptly, as they were on their way to the nut ground, "how far off are those hills over yonder?"

Her brother glanced in the direction her finger indicated.

"Twenty or thirty miles, I should suppose."

"And how do they get over to the other side of the river?"

"There are bridges somewhere," said Darry, indifferently. "See, Joy! the squirrels are ahead of us."

A noisy flock of the bushy-tailed little creatures scampered off in all directions at their approach. But the supply left was abundant, and a few vigorous shakes of the young man's strong arm brought down a small shower upon their heads. Darry filled his pockets, and would have done the same by the tin pail of his little sister had she not preferred to gather her own supply. She sat down on the ground and took it leisurely,

stopping to rest or talk, and once or twice giving her brother a look of earnest, affectionate sorrow that went right to his heart. He had no suspicion of her childish plan of leaving him, but his manner was more than usually gentle and tender as he laughed and talked brightly, trying to make his "little woman" feel gay and childlike. He agreed with his wife in thinking she dwelt too much on such grave, serious subjects for so young and sickly a child. He went back to his work, when the horn sounded, debating in his mind how to prevent this in the future. Would it not be better to send her to school among other children of her own age, in spite of her lameness and feeble health?

Nevertheless, the little girl's words found a faithful ally in a previously awakened conscience, which warned him she might be wiser than he on this point. For some reason, Darry's companions found him very unsociable and sober during the rest of that day.

In the mean time, after filling the tin pail full of nuts, Joy had started forth on her pilgrimage toward those distant hills where she suspected the pearly gates into the Zion-land must open.

The path down the side bank was rough and steep, only to be accomplished with great caution and slowness on the part of the little girl. Putting the handle of the tin pail in her mouth, she held it firmly with her teeth while working her way painfully and slowly to the level meadow-ground below, now limping carefully, holding fast to the tree-branches and wild undergrowth on one side, while supported by the crutch on the other, and now creeping along on her hands and knees, dragging the crutch after. Once fairly there, she sat down on the grass to rest and decide as to the next step.

Joy's heart beat very fast with mingled fear and exercise. Her eyes filled with quick tears as she listened to the men at their work only a few yards from where she was sitting; she thought of Darry's sorrow, returning home to find his little sister had taken him at his word and started without him. She looked across to the distant horizon, so very far away, remembering with a sinking spirit that she might be obliged to pass more than one night alone in the open field without protection or shelter.

Poor little pilgrim! her courage almost

failed her. She was just ready to give it all up and go back with Darry to her city home. But under that crippled form and white, childish face dwelt a brave, firm little spirit. Joy did not easily yield when she had once made up her mind.

"If I go back now," she thought, "none of us will ever get to that beautiful place, for it will be a great deal harder to start again, and like as not the gates would be shut. The book man said we must not mind a few hardships on the way, for when once we got there it would be so pretty and happy we'd forget all about them. I guess I'd better sing some. That'll make me feel better and keep me from being afraid."

So saying, she hung her pail on her arm and started boldly across the meadow, keeping her eyes fixed on the purple hills and singing softly:

"Come to that happy land,
Come, come away :
Why will ye doubting stand,
Why still—"

But the song came to a sudden conclusion and the little pilgrim to an equally abrupt halt; she was stuck fast in the mud, and

found herself sinking deeper and deeper every moment.

Alas ! just in that particular portion of the meadows the fresh, long grass covered a strip of soft morass caused by the spreading of several little hillside springs. Unwittingly the little girl had walked right into a miry slough the very first thing. Owing to her lameness and the heavy pail of chestnuts, she was in much the same plight as Christian, who could not get out without Help. In the mean time, she stood already knee-deep and was in a great puzzle what to do.

Most children would have been too much frightened to do anything but cry. Joy, having studied a similar mishap in Pilgrim's Progress, was more inclined to look upon it as a proof she was in the right road.

"Only I don't see the wicket-gate," said the child, knitting her brows and thinking as hard as ever she could.

But after struggling some time in vain to reach the opposite side, and finding her position becoming worse instead of better, she grew really frightened.

"What ever shall I do?" she exclaimed, the tears starting and her heart sinking very low

indeed. "The book man said if we got in any trouble we must ask the kind Father up in the skies to send us help. But I'm afraid," she added, casting a doubtful look upward, "I cannot halloo loud enough to make him hear."

However, she dropped her pail and crutch, and clasping her hands very tightly together, looked up in the deep blue sky so far overhead and shouted with all her might,

"Dear Father way up in Zion-land, please send Mr. Help, 'cause I'm stuck fast and cannot get out alone."

It was the cry of childish faith, feeble and imperfect as it was, reaching the great white throne in Zion-land, appealing in its simple trust and helplessness to a Father's loving heart. Was ever such a cry unanswered?

It had hardly left her lips when a stout, red-cheeked farmer-boy came running to the rescue. "Halloa! what's the matter?" he exclaimed, in a tone of great surprise, as he caught sight of the little prisoner.

The child stretched out both her hands with an exclamation of joyous relief.

The boy laughed good-naturedly, pulled off his boots and stockings, rolled his pants up to

his knees, then wading through the mud, lifted Joy in his strong arm and bore her in triumph over to the other side.

"Thank you, Mr. Help!" said Joy, earnestly; "but oh, please, wouldn't you go back just once more for my pail and crutch?"

"To be sure I will," responded the lad, heartily, bestowing a pitying glance on the lame limb.

Joy thanked him gratefully as he restored them in a very muddy condition, then began to wipe them off on the grass most vigorously.

The little pilgrim herself was a forlorn-looking specimen. Her shoes and lower garments were loaded with mud and stained with dark, greenish spots. She eyed herself disconsolately, then looked up and met her companion's good-natured, quizzical smile with a deprecating look.

"What business has a little chit like you to be wandering about the country alone in this way?" he asked, half in jest and half in earnest.

"I'm going to the Zion-land," said the child, with a faint flush on her pale cheeks. "But I didn't think the slough came so soon."

The lad's expression of amused wonder struck the child; a chilling doubt darkened her face.

"I know I'm a figure," she said, humbly, "but I guess Mr. Goodwill at the wicket-gate will let me wash my things at his house. Please, is it very far?"

The lad's eyes twinkled with fun, but the wistful, pleading look of the dark brown pair bent so anxiously upon him touched a chivalrous spot in his heart. With an effort he kept his mouth perfectly sober as he replied reassuringly,

"There's a house not far from here with a wicket-gate where they'll be sure to wash you up all right. Only," he added, with a rather comical look, "there's no Mr. Goodwill there just now, but there's a mistress who deserves the name as much as anybody I know. I guess you'll find her first rate."

The little lame girl, looking greatly relieved, took up her crutch and pail, ready for a start.

"Just follow along by the side of that brook, and you'll come to the gate in about five minutes. It's the first house you see, so you cannot possibly miss it. I'd go and show you the way, only I cannot leave my horses."

He stood looking after the little tired child as she went slowly across the meadow with an expression of mingled interest and amusement:

"There's a go! Where on earth did the funny little thing pick up all those queer notions? Guess she's been reading old Bunyan without a commentary, and a pretty chase he'd have led her if I had not happened to come along just then. Never mind, Mrs. Goodwill will put her straight in more ways than one;" and with a pleased little laugh to himself, as though amazingly tickled about something, he went back to his fall ploughing.

CHAPTER III.

THE HOUSE WITH THE WICKET-GATE.

"The feeble footsteps guiding
When from the path they stray,
Who leads to bliss abiding?
Christ is our only way."



HE little stream ran on before to show the way. It was so clear that every pebble of its stony bed was visible; above, a double row of willows threw a pleasant screen over the little foot-path which wandered through the grass at its side. Joy followed where the stream led until she came to a rustic bridge. On the opposite side was an orchard of old apple trees, whose twisted trunks leaned this way and that. Beyond the orchard was a low wicket-gate, and beyond the gate a snug, unpretending farmhouse, with steep, red roof, lichen-painted and moss-grown.

Joy hesitated; that must be Mrs. Good-

will's house, but it did not look a bit like the picture in her book.

She crossed to the other side. A new idea struck her. Sitting down on the bank she drew off her soiled shoes and stockings; dipping her feet into the clear water below, she rubbed them vigorously against each other until they were quite clean and shining. Then she wiped them dry on the grass, and stretching them out, surveyed them with an air of great satisfaction.

"That's a sight nicer," she said, drawing a long breath of content. "Now I'll wash my shoes and stockings and leave them to dry in the sun."

The brook ran steadily on under the low bushes and long meadow-grass to the distant river, sparkling and dimpling in the sunshine and humming a quiet, gurgling tune to itself. The little child left it and went through the orchard up to the back door of the red farmhouse.

Tinkling cow-bells came faintly across from the distant pasture, a party of swallows twittered and darted about their nests in the old apple trees; all else around was quiet and seemingly deserted. Even the barn door

stood wide open, revealing only empty stalls. The yard was freshly swept and a pan of chicken food stood by the low stone steps, but the chickens were either napping or off on an exploring expedition; not a solitary hen was to be seen.

The brick walk leading from the gate to the doorstep was as neat as a pin; so was the little shed in which the wood was piled. Joy was loth to cross them with her muddy, dripping garments. A glance at the shining bare feet reassured her, and she went boldly on through the shed and a small outer room filled with bright tin pans and milk pails.

The door of the next room stood slightly ajar. She hesitated and gave one or two little unheeded raps, then pushed it partly open and stood arrested on the threshold. A large, pleasant kitchen, with plenty of windows and a bright yellow floor as beautifully clean and spotless as a floor could well be made lay beyond. Every other bit of wood-work in the room matched the floor for neatness; the hearth was clean swept up, and a handsome tortoise-shell cat lay in front of the fire all curled up in a ring, dozing away as cats will doze half of their valuable time. In an arm-chair by the open

window sat puss's mistress, a little stout, oldish woman with gray hair and a shrewd, kindly, wrinkled face. Some knitting-work lay in her lap, but she was not busy with it just then; her toil-hardened hands were folded restfully above her clean calico apron, and her thoughtful gaze was fixed on something outside the window.

Everything about the room and its occupants was so exquisitely neat and spotless that Joy felt out of place, and cast a regretful look at the little spouts and rivulets dripping down from her dress. At every step streams of blackness had left a disfiguring spot behind her.

"Please, ma'am, can I come in?" said she, in a timid, troubled voice.

Puss gave a soft purr-purr and half opened her sleepy eyes to see what was wanted, then curling herself up in a rounder ball than ever, shut them again. The old woman's ears were not so wide awake as they once had been, or else her thoughts must have travelled very far away, where the soft voice did not reach, for she never turned her head, even when Joy gave another louder rap.

But puss gave an indignant purr and

opened her eyes to their very widest extent as the child passed by with hesitating, noiseless step.

"Why, where did you come from, little dear?" exclaimed the old woman, turning with a sudden start as a little hand was laid on her knee. "How did you get so near without my hearing you?"

"I knocked," said Joy, in a tone of apology.

Puss indignantly ruffled up her spotted fur and walked off with a contemptuous sniff that seemed to say:

"That little tap a knock, indeed! Why, I could make more noise myself."

But so soon as a word or two of explanation had made the mistress understand the child's mishap, she arose, and with brisk, tender hands removed the wet, soiled garments. Then wrapping her in an old calico double gown of her own, she lifted the child right up in her strong, motherly arms and deposited her on a wide, soft lounge in the corner of the kitchen.

"There, now! shut your eyes and take a good nap, and when you wake up, you'll find a fairy has changed your clothes for fresh, clean ones."

She threw an old coverlid over her, then gathering the garments in her arms, carried them off into the back shed.

The long walk and subsequent mishap had quite exhausted the little girl's frail frame. The soft cushions and quiet room were very soothing to body and mind. Soon the long lashes rested quietly upon the pale cheeks, and before she knew it Joy was fast asleep. The old family clock on the opposite side of the room ticked away the moments and struck the half hours and hours as they slowly rolled on. The early afternoon was past, and still the tired little pilgrim slept, unconscious of all around, her hand under her cheek, over which a faint tinge of pink colour was slowly stealing, and the western sunbeams kissing the shining bare feet peeping out below the old coverlid.

A hand laid upon her head and a strange, cheery voice at length aroused her.

"Wake up, little dear, and see where the sun has gone to while you have been in dreamland."

Slowly the child rubbed open her heavy eyelids, and saw the kind old woman standing by the lounge with a child's clothes—

could they indeed be hers!—all washed and neatly ironed, hanging over her arm.

She laughed, a pleased, kindly little laugh, at Joy's puzzled efforts to remember where she was, then helped her to dress, and making her sit down at the table, set before her a large yellow bowl of rich country milk and a plate of delicious white and brown bread. Joy thought nothing in all her life before had ever tasted quite so good.

The old woman, with her hands at the side of her waist, stood looking on, smiling to see how easy it was for the child to obey her command, "Not to leave a drop of milk behind."

There was a rosy glow in the very centre of each white cheek, and a bright, grateful look in her soft, brown eyes, when the lame girl at length pushed back her chair and took up her crutch.

"Now, then, would you like to come and see me give the chickens their tea, my dear?"

"Oh, if you please, ma'am," replied Joy, quickly. The old woman led the way through the dairy and woodshed. All the muddy spots had been removed; everything was in its usual perfect order.

There was only one little fellow in sight

when they came out on the back doorstep. He seemed to have been sent to keep watch and act as a sort of tea-bell to all the rest, for as soon as ever his bright black eyes caught sight of the old woman with the pan in her hand, he ran off as fast as his short feathered legs would carry him. A moment after, a large number of roosters, hens, and chickens came scampering back with the sentinel at their head.

Joy looked on with much interest while they scrambled and tumbled over each other in their eagerness to seize the corn her companion scattered freely around.

"Now you must come to see my garden, and I will give you a handful of flowers to carry home with you," said the old woman.

Joy started, and gave a sudden wistful glance up at the sensible, kindly old face.

"Please, ma'am, I'm on my way to the Zion-land." If a bombshell had suddenly exploded in her quiet domain, Mrs. Pearson could hardly have been more startled. She stood still and stared at her little guest in speechless amazement.

But as she looked steadily at the earnest face, all quivering with wistful eagerness and

hope, there came a soft lustre in the old woman's eyes, and she put her hand gently on the upturned head.

The look of tender interest emboldened Joy to ask:

"Please, ma'am, will you tell me which road to take to get up to the pearly sky gates?" The pleasant, wrinkled face grew very sober and troubled; but when the child, pointing across the valley to where the meadows swelled into those low hills so misty in their deep blueness, asked if that were not the entrance to the Zion-land, a little smile broke up the sober lines of her mouth. It was a very sweet smile, but it cast a shadow over the little girl's face, for she saw it meant "No."

"Little dear," said the old woman, kindly, "we can never reach the Zion-land on our own earth-stained feet; each must wait patiently in the place the Lord has put her until he sends a strong white-winged messenger to bring her up safely to that far-off home above."

The child looked up with puzzled, pleading eyes:

"The book man said it would not do to wait, or the gates would be shut. He wanted

all to start right off, even the poor weak little children like me. He said the Lord Christ was waiting and looking for us, and that if we said 'For Jesus' sake,' we could all get in.'

"Who was the book man?" asked Mrs. Pearson.

"I don't know his real name," replied the child. "He came to the mines 'way out West when Darry worked there, and stayed at our house six whole days. He had books to sell, and he gave Darry a beautiful one with pictures—all about a man who left his home and travelled on and on, over the hills and past the lions and giants, until he crossed the river to the Zion-land. The men would not listen to him much—they only laughed or got angry; but every morning he used to get all the children together and teach us hymns and talk to us about the 'Beautiful Zion built above.'"

"And so you thought you would start off all by yourself?" said the old woman, reaching down to take Joy's hand in hers and softly patting it. She smiled a little, but her eyes were dim with unshed tears as she thoughtfully noted the crutch and tiny child who had turned her face so resolutely Zionward.

"Come and see my garden first, and then you and I will have a little talk together," said the old woman; and still retaining Joy's hand, she led her around to the other side of the house. But as soon as she came in sight of the flower-beds the little lame child stopped short with an exclamation of delight. It was the prettiest and sweetest-smelling place she had ever been in.

In the centre was quite a large bit of grass-plat, so thick and closely cut that it had all the richness of a green velvet carpet. A wide border, filled with a great variety of gay-coloured fragrant flowers, ran all around; and on the other side of the gravel walk were beds of lavender, verbenas, violets, and even a number of late roses in full bloom. The low fence which separated the enclosure from the surrounding meadows and orchard was almost entirely concealed beneath hyacinth, bean, canary-bird vine, and other creepers, against which background there was a fine display of chrysanthemums, purple, yellow, white, and variegated, stocks, also, and asters and tall hollyhocks.

Brilliant butterflies flitted about as if they enjoyed life after their own fashion here amaz-

ingly, and bees were diligently sucking the honey from the sweetest flowers and transporting it home to a row of hives at the lower end of the garden.

The old woman led Joy to a rustic seat under the shade of an old pear tree in the centre of the grass, and lifting her to her knee, asked what she thought of the garden.

"It's beautiful, ma'am," said Joy, earnestly. "I never was in such a pretty place before."

"My son says it's my idol," said Mrs. Pearson, smiling down at the eager face. "But I think, since the Lord gave us such beautiful flowers to enjoy, he meant us to cultivate and love them."

"Please, ma'am, did the Lord give you all these?" asked Joy, in surprise.

"Yes, indeed, he gave me these and everything else I have in the world. He's my very best and kindest friend; and if you ask him, he'll be yours."

"I did ask him to send some one to help me out of the mud," said little Joy, "but I had to halloa very loud to make him hear."

"No, dear, he can hear the faintest whisper."

The child looked surprised, but pleased.

"He must have real quick ears, then," she said, thoughtfully. "Please, ma'am, is the Zion-land as pretty as your garden?"

The old woman put her hand softly over the little girl's head once or twice without speaking. That far-away look Joy had noticed as she sat by the kitchen window came back into her eyes.

"Every spot is beautiful to me where my Lord is, and my garden seems full of his presence, but in that lovely Zion-land he will be the sun; in his visible, glorious presence there will be fulness of joy. This is only the shadow-land. If the stray beams make it so sweet, what will the land itself be? Do you want that kingdom to come?" continued the old woman, gently.

"Oh yes!" said Joy. "But please, ma'am, I suppose—" and she stopped short.

"Well, dear?"

"I suppose I'll have to wait till the angel comes?"

"Not to have it begin in your heart."

"Oh!" said Joy again, knitting up her brows and thinking harder than ever.

"'I am the door,' says the Lord Jesus."

The old woman paused and looked down into the child's soft, intelligent eye.

"Dear, come to Jesus. Keep very, very close to him. He is the way to the Zion-land."

"I suppose I'd have to find him first?" and the child looked up inquiringly.

Mrs. Pearson's smile was very grave and sweet:

"He has found you, dear. Keep calling to him and hearkening for his voice, and you will soon hear it answering words of peace and joy and love in your little heart."

Joy looked at the flowers and broad landscape and distant low hills in silence. For a few moments only the busy hum of the bees as they hovered to and fro and the soft, sweet note of a bird hunting worms for its supper were heard. Joy stood thinking—thinking with a wistful, listening look. Suddenly the sober little face brightened perceptibly, and a wee smile broke up the grave set of the childish lips.

"Please, ma'am, I cannot hear the voice yet, but all the trees and birds and flowers seem to whisper right in my eyes:

"'Joy, little Joy, he's coming! keep calling.'"

Mrs. Pearson bent down and gave the happy child two or three warm, motherly kisses.

"And so the good Lord let you take this long walk to listen to a flower sermon? He often sends me a sweet message of trust and comfort through these same little preachers. Come, you must have a handful of them to take home with you, and then I must send you away lest your friends should be uneasy."

The bunch was a large and very choice one, and Joy's eyes glistened with pleasure when it was put into the top of her pail.


Mrs. Pearson went with her as far as the rustic bridge, where they found the shoes and stockings all safe and dry, and then pointing out the right path back to the mill, she sent the little pilgrim on her homeward way rejoicing.

The old woman stood on the bridge and watched her as she slowly limped along, the crutch under one arm and the pail carefully hung on the other, but Joy never once turned back to look at the distant hills nor up into the fair sky above. All the way she was murmuring softly: "Dear Lord Jesus, please bring the kingdom inside, and let Joy hear thy voice speaking to her."

CHAPTER IV.

"THY KINGDOM COME."

"Pray, and thou wilt hear him near;
Wait, he'll lead thee to the light;
Seek him early, seek him late,
Fear not, doubt not, pray and wait."

VERYTHING looked somewhat weary and quiet in the late afternoon as the lame girl, letting down the bars, came once more out at the mill settlement.

The road was very dry, and the heavy wagons rolling incessantly past on their way home from the city raised clouds of dust. The farmers and the women folk looked exhausted with their long day's shopping; the little children were sober and tired; even the horses hung down their heads and seemed scarcely to have ambition enough for a slow jog-trot. The roadside grass was whitened with dust, and the flowers had wilted and

drooped beneath the warmth of the October sun.

Joy's nap and bowl of bread and milk had so refreshed her that she had no sympathy with this state of things. With a bright face she sat down on one of the huge logs scattered around the sawmill, and waited for Darry to pass on his way home from work.

Soon after the city clocks struck six the men began to come along in groups of three and four, laughing and talking loudly. At the sight of his sister sitting among the scattered timber, Darry left his companions and came toward her with an exclamation of surprise.

"Why, little woman! I thought you were safe home long ago!"

"I got stuck in the mud, but a big boy helped me out," replied Joy, composedly. "And a real nice old woman washed me up clean and gave me all these pretty flowers. See!" and she held them out with mingled pride and pleasure.

"Pray, what business had you to go near the mud?" asked the young man, good-naturedly, stooping down to smell the flowers with a look of admiration.

"I was trying to find the road to Zion-land. I did not know we had to wait for the angel to come, and I was 'fraid the gates would be shut."

"Pshaw, child! I thought you had more sense," said Darry, a little impatiently. But he lifted her up in his strong arms most tenderly and carried her down the road leading to the city. Joy put the hand that bore the crutch over his shoulder, and held fast to the pail containing the nuts and flowers with the other. Then she looked up in his face and said gravely:

"Are you angry, Darry? You said I need not wait for you."

"Angry! No, indeed. But you must never go off alone in that way again. You might be lost, or some dreadful thing happen to you."

"No, I never will, dear old boy!" and she clasped his neck tighter and laid her head down on his shoulder. "It 'most broke my heart to leave you, but I meant to come back and 'splain the way to you as soon as I'd asked them to keep the gates open just a tiny bit longer. But my old woman says we cannot get to the Zion-land 'cept on wings; we

must just stay at our own houses and keep asking for the kingdom to come inside of our bodies."

"And what then?" asked her brother, with an amused look. "Will the wings grow and you fly away from me, after all?"

"I don't know, Darry; I guess the wings don't come till we're clear inside the gates. But we'll hear the Lord Jesus whispering in our ear all the time, and the birds and flowers will all talk to us about him, and then some day, when the kingdom's come enough, I s'pose he'll send one of the great white shining angels to carry us up to the Zion-land right in his strong arms."

The young man looked wonderingly at the little child in his arms, her earnest face all radiant with a simple, childlike trust and hope in an unseen Saviour and far-away spirit-land. Then with a sigh he gathered the frail form closer, with the feeling it might be the angel messenger would come and take her away from him to the longed-for Zion-land before he could make up his mind to part.

For a few moments Joy rested quietly there, then she began to sing softly,

“Jesus loves me ; He who died
 Heaven’s gate to open wide,
 He will wash away my sin,
 Let his little child come in.
 Yes, Jesus loves me, Jesus loves me,
 The Bible tells me so.”

“Where did you learn that, Joy ?”

She raised her head and looked up in surprise.

“Why, don’t you know ? It is one of my book man’s hymns, only I can’t ’member all the verses.”

She laid her head down again, and was still for a moment.

“Darry, didn’t the book man give you a Bible ?” she asked, suddenly.

“No, Joy. I had one that belonged to our mother,” he replied, with a little troubled accent in his voice.

“Oh, Darry, wouldn’t you lend it to me sometimes ? It’s such a lovely book ! My book man said it told lots about the Zion-land.”

“You must be very careful of it, then, little woman. I promised mother always to keep it for her sake.”

Joy nodded her assent.

"Did the angel take her off to the Zion-land?" she demanded, eagerly.

"She's there if any one is," said her brother, his eyes growing dim and his voice faltering.

The sun was just setting when they reached the bridge; its golden rays lay along the open country and illumined the tall steeples, factories, and houses of the city beyond. Joy begged to stop a moment and watch the gorgeous clouds shooting up from the western horizon as the brilliant ball of fire slowly disappeared behind the hill-tops.

As she looked a sweet, bright expression grew on the little face; turning, she gave her brother a very earnest, wistful glance.

"Well, what now?" he asked, in a grave tone, not unkindly.

"Darry, I think a little bit of the kingdom must be come inside already, 'cause I can 'most feel the Lord Jesus's hand on my head, and I seem to hear him whisper right in my ear, 'Come closer, little lame girl, and put your head right down on my shoulder, for I love the little children.' You know, Darry, the book man said he wouldn't let the men who thought they were 'most too little send them away, but

took them up in his arms just as you have me now."

The young man did not say "Pshaw!" this time, nor even smile. He drew another long sigh and turned away his head without a word.

"Darry!"

He turned and looked down at her with a very, very sober face.

"What makes you sigh so, Darry? Are you sorry to have me Jesus's little girl, too?"

"No, indeed, little woman," he said, heartily.

"Then what makes you act so sorry?" she asked, stroking his face with her soft hand.

"I'll be a good boy and not do so any more," he replied, with a slight smile. But the smile was too sad to satisfy the child's keen, intelligent eye.

"Darry, don't you want the kingdom to come to you?"

Her voice had a timid, half-frightened accent, for she understood him well enough to know he might possibly dislike the question. He hesitated, but there was a great longing in the clear, honest eyes.

"Yes, Joy, I do, indeed."

"Oh, then, Darry, why don't you ask? The old woman said he could hear even the tiniest whispers."

Again her brother hesitated; his lip quivered, and the muscles of his face worked strongly.

"It is not enough to ask, 'Thy kingdom come,' unless we are ready to give ourselves up to do the Lord's will too."

"Are you sorry, Darry?" asked the child, wonderingly. "It's nice to please people when they love you."

The young man's face flushed; he bent down and kissed her tenderly.

"So it is, but it is sometimes very hard to displease others we care for."

Joy looked up with an earnest, half-bewildered glance.

"Are you 'fraid the angel will carry you away from Lindy and the baby? Perhaps, if we asked, he'd take them too." Darry gave a little start. He seemed about to speak, but checked himself, as he saw the sun had quite disappeared and the bright colours were fast fading in the western sky. He was not sorry to find it so late as he replied,

"It will not do to keep tea waiting any

longer. You and I must go home now and finish our talk some other day."

The kingdom of God, as plainly set forth by the constant teachings and illustrations of our Lord when on earth, is essentially spiritual in its nature and workings. It "cometh not with observation: neither shall they say, lo here! or, lo there! for behold the kingdom of God is within you." It is "not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." Those who would enter therein must receive it with the faith and simplicity of a little child; to such it becomes the embodiment of divine power and wisdom; for, as it is written, "they shall all be taught of God." As a grain of mustard seed in its germ, as wind in its unseen, intangible nature, as leaven in its effect upon the whole life and character, so is this mysterious inner kingdom of God to the soul. It is the indwelling presence alone which brings it: Christ in us now is the assurance of present peace, the promise of entire sanctification, the hope of future glory. Blessed, then, are those poor in spirit, who, emptied of self-righteousness and human strength, open wide the doors of the heart to this Prince of Peace:

“theirs is the kingdom.” And this kingdom was now being brought by Jesus into little Joy’s heart. The seed of the word dropped months before by a humble, prayerful labourer in the Master’s vineyard had not fallen into stony or unfruitful ground. In spite of adverse circumstances and limited facilities for its development, a divine power had caused it to take deep root and germinate; and now it began to put forth many little buds and blossoms.

Shut out by delicate health and her lameness from most childish companions and amusements, Joy’s life, though not unhappy, had been unusually lonely and self-concentrated. Darry was away at his work the greater portion of the time. Her sister-in-law was kind, but indifferent. She saw that Joy had plenty to eat, was neatly clad, and taught her to sew, knit, and even cook a little. She nursed her attentively when sick, humoured most of her childish whims when they did not interfere with her own comfort too much, and left her free to spend most of her time pretty much as she chose after her light morning tasks were properly and neatly done.

Darry gave his little sister lessons in read-

ing, writing, and ciphering every evening after tea, but to the book man's short visit she owed her first religious instruction of any sort. In the godless mining region Sunday-schools and churches were an unheard-of thing.

To a thoughtful, imaginative child, often sick and lonely, it was no wonder that the idea of a beautiful, bright home, with no pain nor sickness nor sorrow, should have a great charm. Nor, considering the shortness of the colporteur's visit, was it surprising that many of the spiritual truths taught should be materialized by her crude, untaught notions. The figurative language of the book he had left behind had still more mystified her childish mind as to the real nature of the Christian's pilgrimage and the far-away heavenly kingdom toward which it tended.

Even the conversation with old Mrs. Pearson had not quite cleared away the mists which veiled the spiritual import of the simple fundamental truths Joy had been taught. But in leading her into the very presence and to the direct teaching of an unseen Saviour, the old woman had done the wisest and best thing possible. Would that all could thus walk with Jesus in simple, childlike trust!

Then would the power and reality of the spiritual kingdom be more deeply felt. Heaven pictured by a vivid, childish imagination becomes home, Jesus clung to by a child's trusting hand an ever-present companion. Things hidden from the wise and prudent are often thus revealed unto babes. Verily, the sage must become as a little child before he can enter in.

From this time a new interest had come into Joy's life, brightening its shadows with rays from the Sun of righteousness, and gradually changing many of its aims and ways. The lame child felt no longer lonely or spiritless. A new energy pervaded all that she did. The little light began to shine, casting a limited but very perceptible brightness all around. Even Lindy noticed the difference in the tender, happy face, and the old discontented, dull expression so frequent, the old listlessness too, was gone. She grew thoughtful and ready about any little service she could render, and whatever she was doing went on briskly.

Darry's words had made a deep impression on Joy's mind. She did not forget to claim the promised loan of their mother's Bible, and

searched it diligently to find out, not only about the Lord's kingdom, but what was his will,—if there was anything such a child as herself could do to please him.

During the next week it was her almost constant companion indoors and out on her favourite back step. Of course there was much she could not understand, yet by the help of the Spirit it became a lamp to her feet and a light along the heavenward path. The dead mother's hand and Christian experience unconsciously aided her little daughter's search. The old, well-worn Bible opened most naturally to her favourite passages, and many a word of command or comfort she had marked years before went straight home to the little reader's heart. Joy soon learned to talk with Jesus as freely and trustingly as she would have done with her dear book man, and to fear to displease him as much as she did Darry.

One day as she was reading the book suddenly dropped in her lap, and she sat looking down at the open page with an intent, thoughtful gaze which attracted Lindy's notice and made her ask, curiously,

“What are you thinking of, child? Let me have a share, if you please. You look

as bright and happy as if you had just heard a piece of good news."

Joy lifted her soft, shining eyes with a glad, exultant flash.

"Jesus has come, Lindy! He makes it happy inside most of the time," she said, softly. "That's what I was thinking about, Lindy: how wonderful it was he should be good enough to come and whisper happy thoughts to a poor little lame girl like me."

"You're the queerest young one I ever knew in my life!" said Mrs. Bry, resuming her work with a dissatisfied expression on her pretty face. "It's all nonsense. But if it makes you happier, it don't hurt any one else, I suppose."

A little shade passed over Joy's face, but she did not say anything. "Was the dear Saviour's kingdom inside all nonsense?" Oh no! those who hear his voice have the witness in themselves.

Some one who had noiselessly pushed the door open, and stood unseen on the threshold, so as to hear both question and answer, saw the pale cheek flush and the child's troubled look.

"Why, Darry, why are you here at this

hour?" asked his wife, in a tone of great surprise.

"There was some trouble about rails, and the work's stopped for to-day," he answered, dryly.

Then laying a hand tenderly on his little sister's head,

"Joy, I'm going up the river fishing. Would you like to go along?" Her face answered for her. As she left the room to seek her hat, the young man turned again to his wife.

"Lindy," he said, quietly, "is it kind to try to rob that child of a faith and hope we might ourselves be thankful for in a dying hour?"

He did not speak unkindly, but there was a gravity in his manner that checked the light answer that rose to her lips.


She met his grave, troubled eyes for a moment in silence, then turned away with heightened colour and a slight toss of her pretty head.

Darry gave a low sigh, but went off to seek the boat without another word.

CHAPTER V.

A FISHING EXPEDITION.

“The path may seem dark
As he leads us along,
But, following Jesus,
We cannot go wrong.”

 HE day was still and fresh and sunny. The river looked lovely in the fair afternoon light; a little breeze ruffled the clear water, which reflected with startling distinctness every snowy-white cloud in the deep blue sky. Under the vigorous strokes of Darry's oars the boat swept swiftly and noiselessly toward the main river, leaving a long line of sunny ripples across the watery highway.

Darry wore a preoccupied air, and seemed indisposed to converse. He looked very sober; from time to time his brow contracted and his lips were firmly compressed, as if his thoughts were not agreeable. Joy sat facing

him; her happy eyes danced all around from water to shore and sky, then back to her brother's grave face. Boating was such a rare treat that she was quite content to lean back, enjoying the pleasant motion and lovely scenery in happy silence until Darry felt inclined to chat with her.

For a while the shore along which the boat glided was lined with tenement-houses and little yards no larger than their own; then followed a succession of blacksmith and carriage shops, then a tavern and grocery store. But as the bank rose higher and the stream grew broader, a better style of dwellings became frequent, till, at length, as they shot out into the river proper, good-sized gardens with terraced divisions of vegetables, fruit, and flowers came in sight. The vegetables and orchards were generally below, while above grass, flowers and shade trees made the sloping terrace a perfect fairy scene to Joy's admiring eyes. Rustic seats were scattered here and there under the trees, so as to command the river; gayly-dressed ladies added brightness with their ribbons and muslin and silks; happy, noisy children made the air ring with their joyous voices; the tap of

the croquet mallet and the shouts of the successful players could be distinctly heard. What a pity that Darry was not in the humour to enjoy it all as much as herself!

Between the city and the small hamlet on the opposite shore an old wooden bridge, quaint and dark with age, went trembling across from pier to pier. With its lichen-painted roof, so irregular and antique, it was a picturesque object for the sun to play upon. In the midst of the little village the square white tower of a country church rose above the surrounding trees. To Joy's surprise, the course of the boat seemed directly toward that point.

Darry's face did not invite question or remark, but surely in a moment more they would be grating on the pebbly beach. Already they were in such shallow water that Joy could see the stones in the river's bed, when two or three sudden quick pulls of Darry's strong arms turned the boat; it shot into a deep secluded inlet whose entrance had quite escaped her notice. An expression of mingled wonder and delight sprang to the child's lips:

“Oh how pretty!”

A pleased smile broke up the sober lines of Darry's mouth.

"This is the fishing-place, little woman. Do you think you can wait patiently if the fish should not be in a hurry to be caught?"

"It's perfectly lovely," said the child, clasping her hands tightly together. "It's every bit as nice as Pilgrim's House Beautiful."

The young man pushed the boat under the shadow of the outer bank with one oar and fastened it in security amid the rank undergrowth. Then gathering up his fishing-tackle, he baited two or three hooks and threw them out into the water.

Joy watched his movements with great interest, but then came back to the scene before her with fresh exclamations of pleasure.

Above, on the side where the boat was fastened, the bank rose high and rocky, crowned with trees whose thick, spreading branches overshadowed almost the entire little bay from the long rays of the western sun. But opposite there was a wide extent of lawns and meadows belonging to a gentleman's country-seat. The grass ran down in a long, gentle slope to the very water's edge, and the sunbeams were doing a beautifying work among

the rare shrubs and evergreens scattered around. The grounds were laid out carefully and with great taste; gorgeous beds of verbenas, geraniums, heliotropes, pansies, and other fall flowers were set in the lawn, and beyond a small settlement of glass-roofed hot and green-houses shone in the sun.

In the midst of a noble group of gigantic elms which reared their stately heads far above stood a stone house of more than common size and elegance. It had two large bay-windows on one side, while around the other three ran a broad vine-draped piazza. A tall stone wall and iron entrance gate shut in the place from the country road beyond. Behind the house was a slight rise of ground covered with rocks and trees; the soft amber drapery of the elms, the scarlet flames of the sumach, the golden-plumed birches, the bronzed ash boughs, and the deep mingling of nearly every shade of crimson, maroon, and orange, made up one broad outspread of marvellous colour and beauty beneath the soft Indian summer haze which hung over the woody hillside like a thin, transfiguring veil.

With the smell of flowers came also the sweet scent of hay from some stacks near the

Little Top.



"Oh, Darry, the kingdom's to you too!"

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barn. And as Joy looked two or three handsome cows came slowly down a little path leading to the water to take a drink. The silence around was so absolute that even this slight rippling of the water was noticeable.

Joy drew a long breath of deep content, and turning, met her brother's eyes fixed upon her with an intent, thoughtful gaze.

"Are those restless little eyes satisfied for the present," he asked, kindly, "so that you can let them rest long enough for a chat with me?"

Joy nodded eagerly, and settled herself back in her corner with folded hands and demure face.

"What shall we talk about, Darry?"

"Do you remember our talk on the bridge last week about the kingdom coming, and doing the Lord's will on earth as well as in heaven?"

The child started up so quickly that the boat rocked unsteadily among the intervening branches.

"Oh, Darry, the kingdom's coming to you too! Is that what you wanted to tell me? Has Jesus indeed heard me?"

Her brother's smile was very bright and

sweet, yet a little tinge of sadness mellowed the brightness.

"Yes, Joy, Jesus has been whispering in my heart all this week, and now I hope the kingdom has begun to come. But the next step of the way is up a very rough, steep Hill Difficulty. I shall want all the strength and help I can get to face the lions that threaten the way."

"But, Darry, the lions were chained, you know," said the girl, half bewildered, half catching his real meaning of the figurative language.

"True! but it is hard to trust as we ought when others must suffer by our acts. I'm afraid it will take a long while yet to make me a veritable Mr. Greatheart, even with such a little Hopeful to keep up my spirits."

"Darry," exclaimed his sister, suddenly, "don't you think we could talk more comfortable if I were a tiny mite closer to you?"

"Come, then!" and the young man held out his hand with a smile.

Joy carefully stepped across, and he lifted her on his knee. She nestled closely to him, putting one arm around his neck, and her soft little head rested against his shoulder.

"There, now, dear old boy! begin at the very first, and tell me all about it."

"The very first!" said Darry, softly. "That was a long time ago, before you were born, when the dear mother was alive and used to talk and pray with me. Sometimes I wished to be a Christian pilgrim even then for her sake, but I kept putting it off from year to year until she died and you and I were left all alone in the world."

He paused, and stroked the child's face with his rough, toil-hardened hand very tenderly.

"Poor old fellow! what did you do then?" asked Joy, with a loving glance of sympathy at his grave, troubled face.

"Then I went to the mines. An agent of the company came to the village where we lived in search of men; he promised steady work and good wages, and so I went. But before the first month was over I knew it had been a step in the wrong direction. There was no church nor Christian people there, and the wild, godless set of miners were not fitted to help a man on in the heavenward road. It troubled me very much for a while. I had promised mother on her dying bed to try to

lead a Christian life and bring you up as she would wish, but it seemed an impossibility out there."

"Why did you stay then, Darry?" asked Joy, in some surprise.

"I ought not to have stayed a single week. One who puts himself directly in the way of temptation cannot expect to be kept from evil. But the journey back was expensive, the pay at the mines higher than I could get elsewhere, and then, after a very short time, I became attached to Lindy, whose family and interests were all there. I felt it was wrong on your account as well as my own, yet I stayed on year after year, until gradually my conscience became less troublesome. I grew to like the life and the people, and to care less and less about the truths my mother had taught me."

"And then my book man came," said Joy, in a tone of great exultation.

Darry's face lighted up as with a pleasant thought.

"Yes, your book man was a great help to me. But then, because I would not let the miners abuse him, they turned against me too. They made the place so hot for us that

even Lindy was willing to change. I heard of this new railroad and came here, thinking I would be out of temptation's way, but the Lord saw fit it should be otherwise. Even here the cross must be taken up before I could become a pilgrim indeed."

Joy opened her eyes to their very widest extent: "I don't see how, Darry."

"If one wishes to be the servant of the Lord Jesus, he must be willing to obey all the Bible commands. See here!"

As he spoke he took out his mother's Bible and put it open in the child's hand. Joy read aloud,

"Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour and do all thy work: but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work.'"

The child looked very sober and puzzled.

"Does it mean that you cannot go to your railroad work on Sunday, Darry?"

"I think it does, little woman. It says just that."

"Then why don't you tell the boss so and ask him to let you off?"

"I have asked him," replied Darry, sadly,

"and he said I must conform to rules or he should give my place to somebody else."

"But, Darry, why do they work at the railroad on Sunday? Even at the mines they did not."

"There's a contract to finish it in so many weeks or else forfeit a large sum of money, and they are hurrying up in every possible way, for fear of coming short."

"Couldn't you get some other place, Darry, where you need not work Sundays?"

"I'm afraid not at this season. There were four hundred hands thrown off at the shops last week, and it's too late for gardening."

"Do you think Jesus would mind just for a little while, if you told him how bad things are?" asked Joy, doubtfully. "You have not any money left, have you?"

"Only a few dollars. The moving and buying furniture took most of my savings."

"Well, then, you see, we couldn't even buy bread this winter, perhaps; that would be dreadful. I guess Jesus wouldn't mind if you kept on till the snow comes, and then you'll have to stop, anyhow."

The young man smiled gravely and opened the Bible to another place.

"I'm afraid such halfway obedience would not be accepted. I have studied the subject a good deal, and have come to the conclusion that the Lord means we're to do what he says, no matter what turns up. See! once when he lived on earth, he was very, very hungry, and the devil came to him and told him how to get some bread if he chose. But the Lord Christ knew it would not be a right way for him to take, and so he replied :

"'It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.'

"That means, I take it, that what God bids us we must do even if we are forced to go hungry."

The little girl gave a half-frightened, half-admiring glance at the steady, grave face.

"Even if we starve, Darry?"

"Ay, even if we starve."

But the cheerful voice trembled a little and the earnest, fine eyes grew very dark and troubled.

"We shall not starve to-night, at least," the brother exclaimed, in quite a different tone, as he drew in one of the lines with a fine fish attached to the hook. On examination

both the other two were found equally well loaded, and Darry threw the fish into the bottom of the boat with a very satisfied countenance.

"Now we'll go home and get Lindy to cook them for our supper."

"Darry, have you told Lindy yet?"

The cloud came back again in an instant.

"No, not yet."

"I'm afraid she'll not like it," said Joy, with a wise little shake of the head. But she scrambled back to her seat without any more questions or remarks.

Two or three rapid strokes of the oars sent the boat swiftly along through the water and out into the open river again.

The sun now was just kissing the hill-tops. The brightness of the western sky cast a dazzling glimmer over the fields stretching away on either shore, over the smooth expanse of water, and the distant city toward which they were hastening.

The sweet quietude of evening brooded over everything. Light, sound, and motion all seemed hushed to rest as they glided down with the tide.

Little by little the sun sank out of sight,

till its last glittering edge had quite vanished. The sky was almost cloudless, but a region of golden glory hung over the hill, marking the road by which he had disappeared. The eyes of both were fixed upon the spot in silent admiration for some moments.

"Ah!" said Darry, drawing a long breath, "if only we once reach the golden city in safety, it will not matter much what road the Lord has seen fit to choose for us."

The child answered only with an intelligent, sympathizing smile.

Darry took up the oars with fresh goodwill. The boat sped swiftly homeward, while the western glow faded away and the sober tints of twilight gradually settled down over sky, shore, and river.

Just as they reached the foot of their own back yard, the first evening star came twinkling out overhead.

"See, Darry!" exclaimed Joy, pointing up to it. "When God takes away the sun, he sends the stars, so that it may not be quite dark even at night. I guess, even if you do lose your place, he'll send us some bread somehow. My book man told me that he had often sent him things when he wanted them most."

"Ay, ay, little sister! we'll do what is right, and trust him for the daily bread."


There was a more hopeful accent in the voice, as if the little star-sermon had had its effect. Stooping down, he lifted Joy in his strong arms and bore her on to where the home light was gleaming from the back window.

Joy thought the fish that night were the best she had ever tasted, and consoled herself with the idea that, even if the bread and butter quite gave out, fish were plenty and cost nothing but the trouble of going after them. "And that's just no trouble at all," was her mental conclusion.

CHAPTER VI.

HILL DIFFICULTY.

“One smile alone can gladden
The pilgrim’s uphill lot;
His life is hid with Jesus,
And Jesus changeth not.”

ND now came dark days to the house by the river. The Saturday following the talk recorded in the last chapter, Darry refused to work any longer on Sundays, and was discharged on the spot. The month’s rent had been paid in advance, but after laying in a small supply of fuel and provisions, only a few dollars of the week’s wages were left, work was scarce, and the long winter close at hand. The future looked threatening.

Mrs. Bry was very angry at her husband for throwing up his situation without any hope of another. She put down his sudden religious scruple to Joy’s influence, and treated

her as an intruder and mischief-maker. Her manner to Darry grew also cold and distant.

Joy felt the change deeply. To be held at arm's length, her presence almost ignored, all her offers to take the baby or help along in the housework refused, and to be answered only by cold, angry looks when she made a remark or asked a question, was a great trial to the sensitive child.

She made no complaint, but clung closer than ever to Darry when he was in the house, trying by gentle words and loving caresses to soften the effect of Lindy's unkind manner and harsh reproaches.

In spite of her opposition, the young man kept on steadily and quietly in what he thought the right path. He was graver than formerly, but his manner to his wife grew even more gentle and tender as their limited means began to tell upon the table and the household economies. Often it seemed to his little sister's watchful eyes as if he stinted himself in the amount he ate, lest there should not be enough for them; certainly he took only the simplest and least attractive bits on his own plate.

Every day he went out in search of work

directly after breakfast, often going far out among the farmers in the country in hopes of a stray job, and returning late at night tired and grave, but never impatient or complaining. Once or twice, when successful, he would come in with a pleased, hopeful smile on his weary face, and give the day's earnings to Lindy with bright, cheering words that almost shamed her into responsive good-humour. But these pay-days were rare, and grew still more so as the harvest work came to a close.

Nearer and nearer the gaunt wolves of hunger and cold came howling around the door. Often now there were only potatoes and bread in the house, and the question how to meet the next month's rent was becoming daily more difficult to answer. Lindy grew very irritable and bitter, while the cloud on Darry's face deepened and deepened.

Little Joy watched and ministered to him with loving eyes and caresses, and bravely kept back any fretful word or look, although her delicate appetite was not tempted by the humble fare, and she often went to bed faint and hungry from want of proper food.

But her brother's heart grew daily sadder

as he noted how pale and thin the little cheeks became, and how the tiny hands seemed slowly to waste away. It was no wonder his face was worn and haggard, or that his courage almost failed. Evening after evening he returned weary and discouraged from a long day's search, to meet unkind remarks and a scanty supper of dry bread and potatoes. His words became fewer and fewer, and his eyes had a troubled, sorrowful look which made his little sister's tender heart ache. Did God really require such very hard things? Perhaps, after all, Darry had made a great mistake, and Lindy was right.

Once she said something of the kind to Darry. He smiled sadly and showed her what God said himself in reply:

"What thing soever I command you, observe to do it: thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish from it."

"I have no choice, little woman, unless I am willing to give all up and go back to where I stood before."

"Oh no, Darry; that would be dreadful. I guess it cannot last much longer now, for God says, 'Ask, and ye shall receive,' and I keep asking every night that he'll please send

us some money till you can get another place, 'cause we need it so bad."

"That's right, Joy; keep on praying, and ask that I may never be left to give up, for my strength to hold out seems almost gone sometimes when I see you all suffering for food I cannot get."

As this struggle continued, however, there seemed to be one thing from which he gained comfort and renewed hope,—his mother's Bible. He got in the habit of going out with it to Joy's old seat on the back doorstep directly after tea and turning the leaves over and over, looking out its precious promises and words of cheer to the tempted and sorrowing. What Christ and the apostles and martyrs who followed in his footsteps had borne and suffered seemed to brace him anew for the hard conflict through which he was now passing. The sweet assurances of Jesus's tender sympathy and care for his people helped him to endure patiently and without complaint. Often his cheek flushed at some bitter word from his wife, but he bit his lip to keep back the angry retort, and tried to banish even the frown from his brow, as he remembered the example of the meek One who when he was reviled

reviled not again, but met injustice with calm, pitying gentleness. And the love of that unchanged Friend became more and more precious, and the undisturbed rest and peace of heaven all the brighter in contrast.

Joy generally followed him to the back door, and curling down at his side, would watch his face with looks of the greatest tenderness, and even reverence. It seemed to her to grow stronger and more noble every time.

One evening, after coming home more discouraged than ever before from an unusually long and tiresome tramp up the river to find the last dollar gone and Lindy's temper almost unbearable, the shadow was so very deep and dark that Joy's faith quite gave way.

"There's no use holding out any longer, Darry," she said, following him as he sat down to read. "We shall all starve to death before the Lord sends us anything."

The young man turned over leaf after leaf for a few moments in silence. Then he stopped suddenly, and a brighter look came into his face as he read aloud:

"This God is our God for ever and ever: he will be our guide even unto death."

"Little woman, even death cannot hurt us if he guide us there. 'Though he slay me, yet will I trust him.' Cheer up, Joy! It's always darkest just before day. See! here is another word of comfort for you:

"'The angel of the LORD encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them. Oh taste and see that the LORD is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in him. Oh fear the LORD, ye his saints: for there is no want to them that fear him. The young lions do lack and suffer hunger: but they that seek the LORD shall not want any good thing.' And again: 'O LORD of Hosts, blessed is the man that trusteth in thee.'

"Depend upon it, the angel is near, though we cannot see him just yet, and the deliverance will come in the Lord's good time."

The voice had the old cheery sound, only deeper and more tender.

Joy looked up in his face with a questioning glance.

"Darry," she said, in a tone of surprise, "you seem kind of different somehow to-night—not as if you were a bit afraid or anxious any more. What makes you?"

"I *feel* differently; I came in very much

worried and down-hearted, and I cannot help feeling a little sorry at the thought of selling any of the bits of furniture Lindy is so proud of, and I do not see what else is to be done. But a word here and there in this book of mother's has been like a drop of comfort from her own lips,—not at all as if she were away off in heaven, but close beside me, and I on a stool at her feet with my head on her knee, as it used to be in my childish troubles. She always went to the Bible then for her words, and to-night her voice comes back: 'Wait on the Lord, my son; be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thy heart. Wait, I say, on the Lord.' "

Joy crawled closer and put her hand up to his face. She fancied there was something suspiciously like a tear on his cheek.

Darry took possession of the little hand and went on:

"I've put the matter into the Lord's hands now, and mean to trust him fully to do just as he sees best with us all. I'll wait patiently on the Lord and be of good courage, and you must try too."

The child kissed him, and went up to her room comforted a little.

Her cot-bed was so placed that she could look out the curtainless back window. As she lay there wide awake, thinking busily, hundreds of pitying eyes seemed to gaze down on the pale, weary little face lifted so wistfully to the starlit city above.

"Dear good Jesus, please do send some money soon, and please let the kingdom keep coming in my heart and Darry's, and send the angel-man with help before my courage is all gone, 'cause it's so hard to wait when Lindy's cross and we've nothing scarcely to eat.

"There! I guess he'll help us pretty soon now, 'cause it says in the Bible, 'Ask, and you shall receive.'"

A feeling of peace and restful trust crept over her. She lay still with folded hands and thoughtful gaze, until, overcome by weariness, she at length fell fast asleep.

There was something in Darry's manner at breakfast the next morning which puzzled his little sister to understand. It was not downcast or anxious, as it had been for some time past, but neither was it his former cheery, hopeful way, which had so often encouraged the child. His face was composed and sober, and there was a firm set to the lips

and a sad look about the eyes that troubled her.

She wanted to ask him about it, but, as she did not wish to do so before Lindy, was obliged to wait till the meal was over. She watched then for her chance, and found it almost immediately. Darry went into the back yard to split some wood for kindling, and she followed him:

“What is it, Darry?”

He turned with a little start, and looked down on her with the sad, determined expression still resting on his face:

“What is what?”

“I mean, what is troubling you?”

“How do you know anything is, child?” he said, going on with his work.

“From your face. Is it anything very bad, Darry?”

“No,” he said, quietly. “It’s nothing wrong, only a little hard to do. But it’s the only way. I’ll tell you when I come back;” and he walked away and went out of the front door. In less than an hour, however, he returned, and came into the room where his wife and sister were both sitting, one occupied with Pilgrim’s Progress, the other staring

listlessly out the window with a hopeless, sullen look on her fresh, rosy face.

"There, Lindy! cheer up!" he said, in a would-be gay voice, throwing some bank bills into her lap. "I've paid the next month's rent, and that will keep us in food and fuel for two or three weeks at least."

His wife took up the bills with a quick flush of satisfaction, but exclaimed in surprise:

"Where on earth did you get this, Darry?" His face clouded, but he answered after a moment's hesitation, with a little embarrassment in his manner:

"It's all right, dear girl. I've sold my watch."

"Your mother's watch, that you valued so highly! Oh, Darry, I'm so sorry!" and the young woman laid her hand on his arm with a look of self-reproach and sympathy.

"I value my wife's comfort and peace of mind much more," said the young man, his fine face lighting up with pleasure as he stooped and gave her a kiss of reconciliation.

Joy stole quietly out of the room, and sitting down on the doorstep, covered her face with her hands and burst into a passion of tears.

"There! mother's watch, that Darry had often declared no money could induce him to part with. No wonder," she thought, "he looked so grave and sad at the breakfast-table!"

Darry found her there presently, and sitting down beside her, lifted the bowed form, still shaking with sobs, to his knee, and resting her head against his shoulder, tried to soothe her:

"Hush, hush, little woman! it is not worth all these tears," but his voice was somewhat husky.

"Oh, Darry, how could you?" exclaimed the child, lifting her streaming eyes reproachfully to his. But when she saw that they were not quite clear, she put her cheek caressingly against her brother's with a gesture of affectionate sympathy.

"My poor dear boy, I'm so sorry for you!" In spite of his pain at parting with the cherished token of his mother's love, the young man could not keep from a smile at the matronly tone and manner.

"There was nothing else to be done. Now dry these tears and don't worry about it any more. Thank God, Lindy's all right again,

and that's worth a dozen watches. It almost broke my heart to go against her so."

"Do you think it was the angel put it in your mind to sell it, Darry?" asked Joy, with a very sober face.

"Perhaps so. But you must jump down now, and let me go out again in search of work. I've heard of a small job in the brick-yard which I think will give me something to do for the rest of this week."

Joy watched him pass up the street quite out of sight, and then concluded she'd go and pay her friend the blacksmith a short visit to divert her thoughts. Perhaps he would know about some place for her brother.

The fair-haired child, with her intent look and little crutch, standing beside the bright forge fire watching the little sparks as they flew up like fireflies in the black clouds of smoke; the brawny-armed smith, with his sooty face bent over the glowing iron; the dusky interior of the little shed, with its odd variety of implements,—all made a quaint Flemish picture framed in by the broad doorway.

So thought the two ladies who drew up in front to have a loose horseshoe righted — a

pale, delicate-looking girl not much older than Joy lying back in the low basket carriage, and an older, sweet-faced lady dressed in deep mourning who was holding in with firm, steady hand a pair of frisky, long-tailed Shetland ponies.

A hollow cough from the girl struck painfully on Joy's ear. She turned her head quickly to see whence it came, then, as she saw the lady beckon, touched her friend's arm.

"Mrs. Roberts and her daughter!" he exclaimed, throwing down his hammer and hastening to the door to see what was wanted.

Joy followed, and watched the process of re-shoeing with great interest. Some words from the older lady caught her attention, and she raised her eyes eagerly to the speaker's face, opening her mouth as if to speak.

Apparently, however, her courage failed, and the carriage drove off before she had time to regain it. The words were:

"Yes, our coachman is unable to leave his room, and we are obliged to drive ourselves. I fear it will prove a tedious affair; these broken arms do not knit in a hurry generally. We are looking out for some honest, capable

man to leave in charge of the place when we go to New York for the winter. Do you happen to know of one you could recommend, Mr. Carr?"

The blacksmith scratched his head and looked thoughtful:

"I cannot just think of one now, ma'am. There's plenty out of work that would jump at having the place, but then it isn't every one who's to be trusted."

"And that's especially important, as we wish to leave next week, and there will be no one to see that he does his work properly."

"Just so, ma'am," said the man, shaking his head with a wise look. "It is not one in a thousand that can be trusted without watching."

"Well, good-morning, Mr. Carr. If you should hear of a good man for the place during the next day or two, I'll be much obliged if you will send me word. Mr. Roberts has already been obliged to leave, and we are anxious to follow as soon as possible."

"Oh, Mr. Carr!" exclaimed Joy, eagerly, as he came back to where she was standing; "don't you think Darry would suit the lady?"

"To be sure, child; it would be just the

best berth in the world for him. Good wages and kind, generous people as ever I wish to see. Civil-spoken, too, to everybody. What a stupid fellow I was not to think of your brother wanting work!"

"It isn't too late yet, is it?" inquired the little girl, anxiously. "Darry could go to them this evening after he comes home."

"Yes, he'd best try, by all means. They live in that grand place on the other side of the river. He'll know, for we've been out in my boat fishing near there."

"Oh yes, I've seen it," said Joy, eagerly. "It's a lovely place. Darry took me there the last time you lent him the boat."

"Ay, ay! It's not a place to go begging, even for a day. Such a chance does not grow on huckleberry bushes. Whatever made me do such a stupid thing?"

The child cast an anxious glance after the carriage fast disappearing in the distance. What if, after all, they should get some one before Darry could be told? It would be a great disappointment.

"I wonder if there's nothing I can do?" she murmured, in a low, thoughtful voice. "Perhaps if I went right off and told them about

Darry, they would wait till they saw him, and not speak to any one else.

"Is it very far by the road to their place, Mr. Carr?" she asked, after a little pause.

"Well, a good bit. You go up the street to the old bridge, and that's a full mile across, and then it must be nearly a mile and a half or two miles more to their place."

"It didn't seem so far the night Darry and I went," said Joy, in a disappointed tone.

"No, because you went by water straight across. The road winds round and round, you see, and that makes it a sight farther."

Joy thought and thought, and then walked slowly off toward her own home. She found her sister-in-law clearing up the room with a pleasanter face than she had worn for some time.

"Lindy, I'm going to take a long walk into the country. Would you please just to give me two cents to pay the toll going and coming across the old bridge?"

The little upturned face had such a timid, wistful look on it that the young woman, in her present mood, could not refuse.

"Well, child, two cents isn't much, to be sure. Only take care not to get lost, and


don't go too far. Darry will not be back to dinner, so I'm going to make griddle cakes for supper instead. You'd best take a piece of bread along for lunch."

The little girl gladly obeyed this suggestion, and then with a little fear and trembling started off for the old bridge.

CHAPTER VII.

THE HOUSE BEAUTIFUL.

"Our Lord is good ; in every place
His love is known, his help is found ;
His mighty arm and tender grace
Bring good from ills that hem us round."

 HE broad avenue leading to the bridge was lined with pretty white cottages standing back in green little yards and quaint Dutch houses with high pointed roofs. Bright-coloured maple leaves were scattered all along the stone walk, and happy-faced children chased each other up and down, or busied themselves in the piles collected for burning. Joy kept steadily on till she came to the entrance of the old bridge.

The man who kept the toll came out to take her penny, and then the gate swung slowly back, and her crutch struck the wooden floor of the bridge with a muffled sound. A dim

twilight reigned here, very different from the bright sunlight without; tiny windows high up in the side from time to time cast a few stray beams across the floor and revealed the rafters of the three-sided roof; far in the distance was the opening at the other end, gradually growing larger and larger as she went on. Occasionally a wagon passed on the other side of the dividing railing, going back to the city she had left; otherwise, a profound silence reigned. The mile seemed a long one to the child, and she was relieved when the dark passage at length came to an end and she once more stepped out into the open sunshine. She found herself on a well-trodden country road, no house nor wagon in sight. The broad river looked as cool and smooth as ever, but the city on the opposite shore seemed very far away. For the next mile the road ran along the bank of the river, and the soft pit-a-pat of Joy's crutch fell fast and steadily, then the main road turned off toward the village, and a pathway rising gradually higher and higher led up to the stone house among the trees overhanging the river.

The child did not stop to notice what a very pretty view this footpath commanded as

she climbed slowly up the winding ascent; she was thinking very hard what she should say to the lady when she reached the house. Her heart began to beat quickly, but there was no doubt in her mind as to going on. She never repented she had started, and would have faced still greater difficulties to secure Darry the place. When she reached the handsome entrance gate, she sat down on the grass under an elm tree to recover breath and compose a little speech suitable to the importance of the occasion.

"I'll tell her he's a real good kind brother, 'cause then she'll know he will be a good kind man to the horses, and that he would not touch a cent that did not belong to him, not to save his life, and that he don't need watching about his work, 'cause he wants to please God, and he knows God's looking all the time. And I'll be sure to remember to say 'Please' real often, and 'Yes, ma'am,' and 'No, ma'am,' just as Darry says is proper."

Still she waited thoughtfully, then lifting her face to the sky, whispered softly:

"Dear Jesus, please make the lady give Darry this place where he will not have to work on Sunday."

A doubtful look passed swiftly over the child's face. How did she know Darry could keep Sunday any better here than before? That must be one of the very first questions she asked.

She approached the gate and looked in. How nice and smooth the grass in front of the house looked! And what a grand, beautiful place it was to live in! But with a sudden start she drew back. In front, between the two bay-windows, was a handsome stone porch; on either side, stretched out on stone pedestals, lay an enormous lion, just like the pictured ones in Darry's Pilgrim's Progress. How the child's heart leaped to her throat! Surely she would never venture into grounds thus guarded.

But there was no "give up" in the little lame girl when she had once made up her mind. She comforted herself with the remembrance that the lions in Christian's case were found to be chained. Pushing the gate slowly back on its hinges, she boldly entered and drew near the house, keeping, however, a watchful eye on the terrible beasts.

The next moment she uttered a little cry of mingled joy and wonder. The lions were in-

deed chained ; they were only stone imitations placed there as ornaments to the porch.

“What a silly little girl I am!” said the child, examining them closely. “I might have known people would not keep lions so near the house if I had only stopped to think.”

The front door stood open, and Joy could look right through the wide marble-paved hall to another door opening on the opposite piazza, and the rocks and bushes and trees of the hillside behind the house were plainly visible.

A grave, gray-haired black man with wrinkled face answered her ring and asked what she wanted.

“To see Mrs. Roberts,” replied Joy, boldly. She was ushered into a large square room papered with light green paper and having a white matting on the floor. A quantity of comfortable chintz-covered furniture was scattered around, and there were books, engravings, stands of flowers and ferns, hanging-baskets of ivy, lovely marble statuettes, and a great many other pretty things Joy had never even dreamed of, everywhere. An English lark hung in a cage in the large end bay-win-

dow, and there were two long French windows on the side. These stood slightly ajar; beyond the piazza on which they opened lay the terraced garden Joy had admired from the river the evening Darry took her fishing.

A very beautiful expanse of water, woodland, meadows, and distant hills was seen spread out picture-like through these glass doors, the descent of the flower-terrace from the edge of the little lawn in front of the piazza being very rapid, and the rows of Norway spruces on either side the garden serving as a frame to shut it in. On a lounge drawn up in front of one of these doors, so as to command this view, lay the young girl Joy had seen in the basket carriage.

The older lady sat sewing near; the child thought her face without the bonnet very sad as well as sweet. She looked up as the door opened with a pleasant smile.

"Why, it's the little girl we saw at the blacksmith's shop!" was her surprised exclamation. "My poor child, have you walked all the way from the city? How tired your little feet must be!"

"Please, ma'am, I don't mind it," said Joy, with a little curtsy.

"And what can I do for you, little one, now that you are here? Did you just come for the pleasure of the walk, or to see the place or me?"

"Please, ma'am—" began Joy.

But then she stopped short and forgot every word of the carefully-prepared speech. Her courage, which had been strung up to its highest pitch thus far, suddenly began ebbing fast, and it was only after some coaxing and encouragement on the part of both mother and daughter that she told her errand.

"Please, ma'am, you said you wanted a man, and Mr. Carr thought Darry would do."

"And who is Darry, dear?" asked the lady, kindly.

"Please, ma'am, Darry's my brother, and he's just as lovely and good as he can be. But he's out of work, and he wants a place dreadful bad."

"How does it happen he's out of work? Is he one of the hands they've lately thrown off at the locomotive works?"

"No, ma'am, he was working on the new railroad, and they discharged him 'cause he wouldn't do as they wanted."

"Then I'm afraid he will hardly suit me,"

said the lady, gravely. "I always expect my people to do just as I want."

"Would he have to work on Sunday?" asked Joy, with a disappointed look.

"No, certainly not, except to see that the cattle had their usual supply of food and water."

"Then I guess he'd suit," exclaimed Joy, in a glad little voice. "Please, ma'am, he's just as honest as can be, and he'll do anything in the world you bid him if the Bible does not say he must not."

Mother and daughter exchanged glances.

"Come here, little one," said the lady, stretching out her hand and drawing Joy to a low seat beside her. "Tell me all about it. I should not wonder, either, if Darry just suited me, after all."

Joy told the tale of her brother's decision and what it had cost him with a touching pathos and innocent childish simplicity that at once convinced her hearers of its truth.

"Oh, mamma, do take him! I am sure he is the very man we want," exclaimed the young girl, eagerly, as the lady seemed to hesitate.

"Does Darry know anything about horses

or gardening?" Mrs. Roberts inquired, thoughtfully.

"He does about gardening, I guess," said the child, in a confident tone. "I don't know about the horses, ma'am, but he could learn soon. Darry's real smart; everybody says so."

"It's evident his little sister thinks so," said the lady, with a pleased smile at the child's earnest face.

"The horses would not matter much this winter, mamma," suggested the young girl. "You know I always like you to drive me best, and we shall leave for New York so soon now."

"Well, you can ask Darry to come and see me about it early to-morrow morning," said Mrs. Roberts, bending a sad, fond look on her daughter's sweet, eager face. "I think if we are pleased with each other after a little talk together, I must give him a trial, for your sake, Ida."

"Oh, thank you, mamma!" said the young girl, sinking back among her pillows and giving one of those little hacking coughs that had first attracted Joy's attention at the door of the blacksmith's shop.

A look of anguish passed over the lady's face, and she listened to Joy's earnest expressions of gratitude as one whose thoughts were very far away.

Yet she kindly insisted on the child's having a substantial lunch of bread and meat before she left, and sent her off with a servant to another room for that purpose.

When Joy was brought back to say "Good-bye," Ida Roberts held out her hand and drew her up to the side of the couch on which she was still lying.

"Little Joy," she said, kindly, "will you ask your brother to bring you to see me again before I leave?"

"Oh yes, ma'am," said the child, with a look of pleasure. "I'd like to come ever so much, and please, ma'am, do you know about the kingdom coming?" she added, a little abruptly.

The young girl smiled brightly:

"I hope I do. Why, little Joy?"

"Because I thought if you didn't, perhaps you'd like to hear," said Joy, gravely.

"So I should. Tell me what you know, that we may see if you and I think alike about this kingdom."

"Please, ma'am, the kingdom is Jesus's great, beautiful city 'way up in the sky. Nobody who has not wings can get there, 'cause it's so high up, and there's no ladder long enough to reach. Besides, folks must be all white and pure and good inside first, and then the angel with wings will be sent after them when the time comes. He'll take them right up in his strong arms and hold them tight, so they cannot fall, till they reach the golden gate. Then he'll knock until the angel who keeps the gate-key speaks and asks, 'Who's there?' and he'll say, 'One of Jesus's little pilgrims who wants to get in.' Then the door will open wide, 'cause the hymn says so, and the angel will fly in and put the person he carries right into Jesus's arms, and they'll each have a place of their own there that Jesus has got ready beforehand, and there will be no more sin nor sighing nor sorrow any more. Is that the way you know, please?"

"Something very much the same, little Joy. Did Darry tell you all this?"

"Oh no, not Darry. My book man told me some, and Mrs. Pearson, and I read some out of our mother's Bible, and some I found out for myself, 'cause the Lord Jesus is bringing

the kingdom down a little more every day inside of me. Please, ma'am, did you know the kingdom must come inside first?"

The young girl gave a silent assent.

"I didn't till Mrs. Pearson told me. It did not seem as if such a great, beautiful thing could come inside a poor little lame girl. But I kept asking and listening for Jesus, and when he came, then the kingdom came too. Darry says being like Jesus and being with Jesus is the best part of all."

Joy turned to repeat her thanks and say good-bye to the mother, who had been a silent listener to the conversation between the child and her daughter.

"Please, ma'am, Darry will be sure to come right after breakfast, and I'm so much obliged to you and Miss Ida."

To Joy's surprise, the lady lifted her to her knee and bestowed several silent caresses upon her, mingled with tears.

"How are you going to get home again, little Joy? It's too far for you to walk," she said as soon as she could speak.

"Oh, I don't mind," said Joy, contentedly. "I can rest after I get home."

"Three miles here and three miles back are

too far for such little feet. I'll send the stable-boy across the river in a boat with you."

So Joy sped homeward across the same watery highway she had once before passed with Darry, only the boy was not so skilful a rower, and the boat went by jerks and starts. Joy was too exultant to care for that; the unsteady strokes of the oars kept time to a most bounding little spirit. She was landed at their own back door, and found Darry busily at work on the wood-pile, the brick-yard job having proved a failure.

The faces gathered around the tea-table to enjoy Lindy's griddle-cakes were very bright and hopeful. Lindy chatted as pleasantly and contentedly as before Darry had thrown up his former place, being especially gracious and kind to her little sister-in-law. Her husband was gravely cheerful and Joy rosy with satisfaction.

Two hearts at least gratefully echoed the psalmist's words when, after the meal was ended, Darry brought out his mother's Bible and for the first time established a family altar in his little household:


"'Oh give thanks unto the LORD, for he is good: for his mercy endureth for ever. Let

the redeemed of the LORD say so, whom he hath redeemed from the hand of the enemy. And gathered them out of the lands, from the east and from the west, from the north and from the south. They wandered in the wilderness, in a solitary way; they found no city to dwell in. Hungry and thirsty, their soul fainted in them. Then they cried unto the LORD in their trouble, and he delivered them out of their distresses. And he led them forth by the right way, that they might go to a city of habitation. Oh that men would praise the LORD for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men! ”

CHAPTER VIII.

DARRY'S SERMON, AND HOW THE ANGEL CAME.

"For in the Christian heart is found
One little spot of sacred ground;
The waves may beat, the winds increase,
They cannot reach that spot of peace."

ARRY'S interview with Mrs. Roberts was most satisfactory to both parties. The duties of his new position were not arduous, and the wages offered liberal. It was agreed the young man should sleep at home, and that on Sunday mornings, after feeding the cattle, he should prepare their other meals in such a way that the stable-boy could do whatever else might be necessary; the latter was also to sleep in the house, as company to the old housekeeper, who remained in charge during the winter. This left Darry free to go to church with his family and attend to any morning or evening matters in which Lindy might need his help at

home. Once more, therefore, sunshine reigned in the little house by the river, and the kingdom in Joy's heart grew brighter and brighter.

Ida Roberts sent for her daily during the week she and her mother remained at the Lawn. She delighted to have the happy child by the side of her couch, drawing out her first original notions of Bible truth, or teaching her new hymns and tunes to sing for her.

Before she left she confided to Joy as a great secret the fact that she was daily expecting the angel messenger to take her to the Zion-land, and that this was the reason of the cloud on her mother's face.

Joy looked surprised, pleased, then thoughtful.

"Why does that make Mrs. Roberts sorry?" she asked, in a tone of wonder. "You'll see the dear Jesus there, and have such a happy time."

"But mamma will be left all alone," said Ida, sadly. "She'll have no daughter to love and take care of, and most of her old friends have already gone."

"Why, she can keep on loving you just the same," protested the child, "and when you

have wings of your own, you might come down once in a while and see her for a little."

But the young girl shook her head with a smile :

"No, little Joy ; when I have once reached the beautiful Zion-land I shall not be likely to come back to earth again. Mamma will come to me some day ; we must wait till then to see each other."

"Well," said the lame girl, in a consoling tone, "you'll both have Jesus, at any rate."

The dark, beautiful eyes shone.

"Jesus never leaves or forsakes," murmured the lovely lips, softly. But a violent fit of coughing prevented any more conversation at that time. Before Joy again visited the Lawn both ladies had gone to their city home.

One Saturday night, about ten days after, Joy was awakened by a violent storm. Torrents of rain poured down on the roof and the beams creaked heavily. The little girl lay awake some time listening to the blasts as they moaned and shrieked dismally around the eaves, then drawing the coverlid up over her head, went fast asleep again. All night long the storm raged furiously, blending with

the rushing sound of the river, as hour by hour it rose higher and higher, so that by the next morning it had quite overflowed its usual bounds. Soon it was approaching unpleasantly near the back doors of many of the houses in that lower part of the city where the Brys lived.

Still the rain continued to pour down with unabating fury and the angry waters came nearer and nearer, until about noon it became necessary to move all the furniture from the lower rooms up to the attic in which Joy slept.

It was hard work, and occupied the greater part of the afternoon. When at length it was safely accomplished, the little garret presented a scene of confusion that baffled all attempts after order. The room was so filled with the stove, table, chairs, bed, washstand, bureau, and other articles packed carelessly in baskets or piled on top of each other among the boxes and barrels already crowded in the farther corner, that there was very little walking space left. Cold meals of bread and meat were all that were possible, as the stove could not be used for cooking. These were eaten without dishes, sitting around on whatever piece of furniture was handiest.

After an early tea, Lindy said she was too tired and sleepy to sit up any longer, and she retired with the baby to the little dark closet under the eaves where Joy's cot-bed had been put to make room for the other larger articles.

Darry sat down on a box near the low window, and taking his little sister on his lap, looked thoughtfully out. The rushing stream, as it swept madly on in its wild career, bore along with the swift current all sorts of odd things it had picked up in its course,—roots and tree branches, boards, barrels, articles of furniture; even one or two outhouses and bridges went dancing past the foot of their little yard on a race to the main river.

The moon was just struggling through the dense embankment of clouds overhead, shedding a faint, weird glimmer over the scene.

"Darry, wasn't it dreadful going to feed the cattle this morning?" asked Joy as she gazed wonderingly out.

"Pretty bad, little woman. Not such hard work, however, as it will be to-morrow, probably, for the waters were only just beginning to rise at that time."

"Couldn't you go by the bridge?" asked the child, a troubled look coming across her face.

"I'm afraid not. The water's up to the floor already, and some persons think the bridge itself will go next."

"Oh, I hope not! Do you think it is likely, Darry?"

"It looks shaky enough, but the old fellow is plucky, and has stood many a hard tug in years gone by, so perhaps he will weather this too."

"Do they often have such storms?"

"Every spring nearly the whole flats are covered. At this season it is very unusual, but the frequent and heavy rains we've had during this month accounts for the water rising so rapidly now. The brooks and smaller streams were all swollen before this storm began."

"Darry," said Joy, after pondering a while, "was it Sunday work moving up here?"

"I think it was, Joy. The flood put it on us to do; certainly it was not our choice."

"Are you sorry we could not go to church to-day, Darry? I am; the singing is so nice, and the preaching too, when I can understand it."

"We can have church here now, if you wish, all by ourselves."

"Oh, how, Darry?" and the child started up. Her brother smiled at her eagerness, and brought the little head back to its resting-place against his breast.

"I might read some Bible verses in the moonlight, and perhaps even preach you a little sermon that you could understand, then you could sing some hymns and we could pray together. Don't you think that would be a sort of a church?"

"I thought a church was a building with a pulpit and ever so many people," said Joy, doubtfully.

"Oh no; the true church is not the building, but the people gathered together to worship. Jesus says where two or three are gathered in his name he is in the midst. You and I are two, Joy, and Jesus will hold church with us in this room if we ask him to join us."

"But did you ever hear of such a church, Darry, in a garret?"

"The apostles first met in an upper room, and in times of persecution, when men were put to death for worshipping God according to their own consciences—how sad to think that such times there were!—Christians used to collect in caves and mountain glens—any

place, no matter how humble, which was comparatively safe from discovery."

"Well, then, you commence, Darry;" and Joy settled down in his arms with a little sigh of content.

By the dim rays coming in through the little window, Darry managed to read the fourteenth chapter of John's gospel, then drawing the child in his arms quite close, he spoke a few earnest words of prayer in her very ear.

Joy kept as still as a little mouse till he had finished and raised his head.

"Now it is time for a hymn, I think."

"What shall I sing, Darry?"

"That last new hymn Miss Ida taught you is very pretty, Joy."

So the little girl folded her hands, and looking gravely up in her brother's face, sang clear and sweet the following words:

"Far away from the earth, far beyond the blue sky,
Is the home where all Christians shall go by and by;
How bright are its glories! how sweet is its rest!
What a fountain of joy springeth up in each breast!
The light of God's countenance there is displayed,
But since Jesus is with them, they'll not be afraid.

"Up, up into heaven they fly without fear,
And the sweet angel voices sound near and more near;

And the walls of the city shine brighter than gold,
And the twelve pearly gates in the distance unfold.
No one there can enter whose debt is unpaid,
But if Jesus is with them, they'll not be afraid.

"I'm a poor little child, very sinful and weak;
No good thing can I do, no good word can I speak;
Oh how can I ever that bright heaven win?
And who will speak for me that I may go in?
On One that is mighty my help is all laid—
If Jesus is with me, I'll not be afraid.

"Since my little life is all held in his hand,
And should be daily just what he shall command,
I'll trust him to give me whatever I need,
And beg him to be my dear Saviour indeed.
Come want or come sorrow, come sunshine or shade,
If Jesus is with me, I'll not be afraid."

"And when he permits me to suffer and die,
Still quiet and glad in his hand will I lie.
He's washed out my sins and he's paid all my debt,
I've asked him to keep me, and he'll not forget.
He through the dark river a safe way has made:
If Jesus stays with me, I'll not be afraid."

A deep stillness reigned for a while in the moonlit room, then, in tones that trembled a little, Darry said, "Thank you, dear little helper."

"Miss Ida said I was always to think of her when I say that," remarked his sister,

gravely. "Do you think the angel has come for her yet?"

"He is coming quickly, from what the old housekeeper tells me. She fails every day."

"Then she'll begin watching for me, 'cause she promised to. Do you wish the angel would come for us pretty soon, Darry?"

The young man hesitated and looked grave: "It would be hard to leave Lindy and the baby and you to fight your way alone, but I think if Jesus was with me, I could say 'I will fear no evil.' Even here at times he seems so very near and sweet that all else is as nothing in comparison to his presence. Yes, I trust, when the messenger comes, I shall be glad and ready to go."

"I hope he'll let us go together," said Joy, a little anxiously. "I should be afraid to stay here alone."

"Not if Jesus was close beside you. His arm is a better support than mine can ever be, dearly as I love you."

"Haven't you forgot about the sermon, Darry?" asked Joy, after a long silence in which the young man's thoughts had gone off on a road of their own, leaving hers to travel on by themselves.

He came instantly out of his abstraction, and with a grave little smile gave out as his text :

“‘Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.’ That little flock means you and me, I think. We are little in numbers; we have little strength to reach the kingdom by ourselves; we are little in all that the world calls great—little in money, in fine clothes, and earthly friends. And the kingdom spoken of is such a great, glorious, grand place that it would be no wonder if such little people should be discouraged at the thought of getting in there. But Jesus says, Don’t be afraid, little flock. The great King of the land is your Father. He loves you, poor and weak and humble as you are. You have nothing to buy the kingdom with, but it is your Father’s good pleasure to give it to you, without money and without price. Don’t be afraid, just come and take it as a free gift. The good Father does not want pay; it is his pleasure that you should share this happy, lovely home with him. And it is his good pleasure because he does it for Jesus’s sake. All the wandering earth children have forfeited all right to

heaven ; they are impure, sinful, disobedient. But Jesus has come and been punished for our guilt ; in our place he has stood. His blood cleanseth from all sin those who come to the fountain thus opened. His presence in the heart is purifying and healing. So Jesus says, ' Fear not, little flock ; come to me to be made ready ; ask in my name for admittance, and then it is the Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.' And this giving means the heart-kingdom as well as a place in the Zion-land, I think, Joy.

" There is where the gift must begin, if at all ; not what we have, like meat and drink, but righteousness and joy and peace through the holy indwelling presence, makes the kingdom. Just so fast as these come within us all that is sinful and weak and low vanishes, and our hearts grow pure and strong. All our striving and efforts here are useless except so far as Jesus works in us both to will and do of his good pleasure. Therefore his word is, ' Abide in me and I in you ; so shall ye bear much fruit.' Even in the kingdom of glory we shall be satisfied, because we awake in his likeness and see Jesus as he is in all his loveliness. Jesus will be the king-

dom there, just as Jesus must be the kingdom here, little woman. Eye hath not seen, ear hath not heard, yet, but the Spirit does at times reveal such glimpses within that we long to fly away to that fulness of joy which can only be found in his visible presence."

The young man paused, and became again lost in thought. The little audience looked up with glistening eyes.

"Darry," she said, earnestly, "that is the beautifullest sermon I ever did hear, and I could understand almost every word."

"I'm so glad! You and I must take great care to keep close to Jesus, and trust him to keep close to us."

The child leaned her head against his breast and looked thoughtfully out of the window at the gloomy water. Suddenly a bright, rising flame shot up across the sombre sky.

"Darry, see! what can that be over by Mrs. Roberts's place?"

Her brother cast a hasty glance in the direction the little finger pointed, then arose quickly.

"I'm afraid the barn is on fire!" he exclaimed, in a troubled voice: "it's just in that direction. Sam is careless about going

there with a light, though I've warned him it is not safe."

He looked anxiously out at the rushing stream, and then down at the little child at his side.

"There's no help, little woman. I must go across and see what can be done."

"Oh, Darry, please stay home. You will never be able to cross in a boat to-night;" and Joy clung to his knees in an agony of fear.

"It's my duty to try, at any rate, Joy. Mrs. Roberts has left me in charge of the place. There's no one else to do anything but the old woman and an ignorant boy."

When her brother spoke in that tone, Joy knew that nothing she could say would move him. She released her hold, and sank down on the box behind with a very white, scared face.

Darry crossed the room, and rousing his wife, explained hastily what he was going to do.

The little listener heard the earnest words of expostulation and Darry's low, affectionate reply, then he came again into the outer room, drew on his overcoat, and took down his cap. Joy waited breathlessly. Would he go without another word?

But no ; he drew near even in the act of tying on the cap securely, and said in an encouraging tone,

"Fear not for me. I shall be just as much in the Lord's care on the river as you will here. Wait on him ; be of good courage and keep praying. Jesus is a very present help in every time of need."

"I'll try, Darry," said the child, wistfully, as she clung to him, shaking from head to foot, "but somehow it seems as if you were going away for ever."

"Not for ever, little woman ; even at the longest we shall meet in the Zion-land."

He stooped down and took the trembling little figure in his arms.

"I will put you in Jesus's care ; that is the safest place for such a faint-hearted little pilgrim. He will hold you closer and more tenderly than even I can."

And the next instant Joy's trembling ceased as the low, trustful words, so clear and distinct, seemed to lift her right to Jesus's arms. Then Darry took the pale, white face between his hands and gave it a parting kiss.

Joy followed his rapid strides to the window as fast as her lame little feet could carry her.

She saw him unafsten the boat-chain he had attached there on his return early in the morning, swing himself down by his arms, and push off. The swift current swept down the tiny bark; one moment it tossed upon the fierce, raging stream, the next it had passed from sight.

The flames shot up higher and higher as the next half hour rolled on, then gradually died down, leaving only an indistinct, uncertain red light and a volume of dark smoke, like some beacon-fire on a distant hill.

The little watcher at the window waited anxiously at her post until long after the midnight hour had sounded its twelve muffled strokes; then, worn out with the day's toils and excitement, she fell fast asleep on the floor.

On the river the little boat struggled manfully onward toward its desired haven; the strong arms of the rower battled successfully against the raging fury of the waves until a mass of floating timber came in violent contact with the boat, and all was over.

From the little church in the garret Darry went up to the general assembly of the Church in the Father's house.

And the little watcher at the window slept on all unconscious of her loss. The angel had come for Darry, and she was left behind.

Fear not, little child! you are not alone. By your side walks an unseen Guardian strong and tender. He will guide your little feet safely over the lonely, rough bits of travelling before you until you also are landed in the far-off Zion-land!


"Watchman, what of the night?"

The night cometh, but also the morning.

CHAPTER IX.

CASTLE DOUBTING AND GIANT DESPAIR.

"Only the Lord can hear,
Only the Lord can see,
The struggle within, how dark and drear,
Though quiet the outside be."

 HE morning came. The sun shone as brightly into the little garret window as if the work of destruction had not swept away all the heart sunshine from its inmates. Joy awoke and gazed out in silent wonder. So far as the eye could reach stretched the wild waste of heaving waves, blotting out the broad, fertile landscape which lay beneath. Here and there above the turbid lake-like expanse a tall tree-top or the roof of a farmhouse was visible, growing as it were from the water.

Nor was the front view more encouraging. Boats were moving to and fro along the street,

carrying provisions to those in want or fishing up the pails, chairs, and broken furniture of all sorts which were dancing up and down in every direction. As the day wore on the waters subsided as rapidly as they had risen, and by the afternoon the street was again visible, and the families began to clear out the damp, dirty rooms below and replace their furniture.

Nothing was heard from Darry until about sunset, when their neighbour the blacksmith came to break the sad news that his body had been picked up some distance down the river quite lifeless.

The shock was so great that his wife fainted away, and poor little Joy felt as if the very foundations of everything had given away beneath her little pilgrim feet. Her grief, though silent, was deep and enduring. Day by day the sad little face grew worn and thin and the halting step more and more weary, while the voice sounded full of unshed tears.

The funeral was over; Lindy went listlessly about her usual work, and the busy flow of life swept past the front door as before the flood came. But oh how still and desolate the house seemed to the lonely little child on the back doorstep!

She had brought out the skirt of an old dress to rip apart for dyeing, but the work dropped unnoticed to the ground and the tears streamed silently down the wan, white cheeks. The mystery of death was pressing heavily upon her childish heart.

How strangely peaceful and at rest the pale, still face in the coffin had looked! Yet the touch of those icy, colourless lips had chilled and awed her. Was that inanimate form her dear, cherished brother? She had called his name in an agony of grief, but the heavy eyelids had not even trembled in response to the wild appeal. When before had Darry ever been deaf to his little sister's call? He could no longer feel nor hear. Something had gone out of him, leaving a Darry that was not the real Darry. What?—and where? Was he in the Zion-land, or underneath the damp sod in that distant cemetery where she had seen the coffin deposited?

She had overheard some of the women who came and went during those two days the body lay in the house talk of purgatory and the money which must be paid to get him out. Lindy believed in such a place, she knew, and had wept bitterly at her inability to pay

for masses. But how could one Darry be in that dreadful place and another shut up in the coffin? The child shuddered; she could hear again the harsh, grating sound as the lid was screwed down which shut in the pale, cold face from her sight.

Picking up her work, she went back into the room where her sister-in-law sat reading a letter just received from her brother in the West. It offered her a home for herself and child, but said nothing about the little lame girl. What was to be done with the homeless, friendless child?

After a short time of troubled meditation, she said in a low voice,

"Joy, I've a letter here from brother Tom. He wants me to sell out and take the baby to live with him. I don't see what better I can do."

"Not and leave me behind, Lindy," exclaimed the child, in sudden terror.

"He has a large family, Joy, and he says nothing about bringing you," answered the young woman, in a worried tone, avoiding the eye of her little questioner.

"Lindy," said the child, slowly, after a moment of anxious deliberation, looking earn-

estly into the woman's face, "do you mean I'm to stay here in the house alone?"

"No," replied Lindy, reluctantly; "I suppose that would be impossible."

"But what then?" asked Joy, anxiously.

"There's only one thing I can think of," said the woman, in a low, almost inaudible voice, while a deep flush crossed her averted face,— "that is the county-house."

She saw the child's sudden start, but not how pale and frightened the little face grew at the very idea. Joy did not protest nor give way to the sudden burst of passionate grief she had expected. She stood perfectly still beside the window, as if turned to stone, looking at Lindy incredulously out of her large, reproachful eyes.

"You see, Joy," she went on, after a short, embarrassed silence, "it would be impossible for me to support the baby and you and myself, and my brother cannot be expected to offer a home to a person who has no claim. I'm sure I wish I had one of my own to share with you."

The child made no answer. Turning away her head, she looked across the river and broad, rich-coloured flat country to the far-

Little Joy.



"I mean, how soon must I go?" she asked, in low but steady tones.

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away hills beyond. But it was with dim, unseeing gaze. During that short interval of painful silence she seemed to have grown in an instant old and womanly. Of course she had no claim on Lindy's relations,—on nobody, in fact, in all the wide world. Henceforth she must take up the burden and struggle of life alone. Oh, Darry, Darry! how little you thought the little sister you so fondly cherished would ever come to the poorhouse!

But the tightly-clasped hands and fixed, grave set of the little lips were the only outward signs of the tumult of grief and passion raging within the childish breast. The face she turned again toward her sister-in-law was pale and sober, indeed, and an old, wise look had come over the childish features, but the voice was unnaturally calm and clear:

“When, Lindy?”

“When what, child?”

“I mean, how soon must I go?” she asked, in low but steady tones.

The young woman hesitated.

“I suppose the sooner I start, the better,” she said, at length. “By Monday or Tuesday next, perhaps.”

And with no more words on the subject, the preparations went briskly on from that moment. The furniture was sold to the tenants who were to take the house after they left. Lindy occupied herself in putting the clothing of all three in a good condition, and was as kind and affectionate as she knew how to be to the little child whose heart was so sorely wounded at her sudden desertion. But Joy shrank from her consoling words and evaded all caresses; even the baby-nephew's clinging arms and kisses seemed to hurt more than heal. Her grave composure never gave way, however. To the very last she was helpful and submissive, assisting so far as her feeble strength and lameness would allow, and uttering no word of complaint. But her manner was listless, almost lifeless, and the sober, grieved set of the lips never once broke up into even the shadow of a smile.

Alas! the poor little pilgrim had now fallen into the merciless hands of Giant Despair, and her way seemed leading on to the very dungeons of Doubting Castle. And the keys which would have unlocked those iron gates were shut up in the neglected little Bible which rested unopened in the pocket of her

dress, and which in her great trouble she scarcely thought of.

Sadly, but without a tear, she stood in the dépôt and watched the long train sweep past, carrying away to the Far West the two remaining members of the little family circle which Darry's death had so suddenly broken up. Then she started for her future home in the outskirts of the city. The necessary arrangements with the proper authorities had all been made and her clothing sent there the previous day, so that she was expected.

It was still early in the forenoon; the business street was thronged with crowds of clerks and shoppers hurrying to and fro, but Joy kept slowly on with sober, lagging steps till she reached the open square filled with grass and trees at the very head of the street. She rested her bundle on the fence, and stood still a few moments to rest. A large public building rose beyond, and on either side two branch roads led off toward the thinly-populated outskirts.

Joy took up her bundle again after a very short pause and went steadily along the right-hand road, past a row of small new houses and one or two old, tumbledown shanties; then

came a stretch of fields and pasture lands, and then the poorhouse. It was a square red brick building, standing quite back from the road in an open field. There were only two or three stray trees anywhere near, and the house had a bare, desolate look.

The lame child looked wistfully at it with a sad sinking of heart. Must all the rest of her life be passed here, without a single human being to care for and love her? A great longing for just one comforting word or caress from some one came surging up with a force that almost seemed to choke her, but she did not give way to tears. With the same unmoved, dull face she approached the court, where several old persons and children were sunning themselves.

"It's the new girl," cried several of the children, pressing around her. "Mother Higgins said she was coming this morning."

A bold, black-eyed girl with ragged dress and bare feet came forward and demanded in a rude, insolent tone,

"What's your name, young one?"

"Joy Bry," replied the little girl, in a voice which had a weary, hopeless intonation.

"Humph! Joy-less would have suited you

better ;" and she gave a short, sneering laugh. "Where do you come from?"

Joy hesitated, then answered slowly, "From Frog's alley."

"You and the frogs might go very well together," was the scornful reply as she turned away and exchanged several not very complimentary remarks as to Joy's looks and dress with one of her companions.

The dull eyes had flashed at the insult, but the forlorn little figure stood patiently amidst the group of her tormentors with the same stolid, sullen look on her face, until a little blind boy about her own age came forward and kindly offered to take her to the mistress of the house.

A thin, sharp-featured woman with harassed, careworn expression was superintending the preparations for dinner in the kitchen where the little guide led the new-comer. He went up to her as readily as if he had the full use of his eyes, and pointing to Joy, who stood still on the threshold, said,

"Mother Higgins, this is the little girl who was to come to-day. They were teasing her outside, so I brought her to you."

"All right, sonny; I'll take care of her.

Run back now and tell the men in the field dinner will be ready in no time, so they'd better hurry up."

The voice and manner were quick and decided, but not unkind. Joy took a little heart and ventured to sit down on the edge of the nearest chair, for she had eaten little breakfast and felt faint and weary with all she had gone through that morning.

"Poor child! it's pretty hard parting with all your friends and coming among such a wild, lawless set as you'll find here. But you'll get used to it after a while and learn not to mind what they say or do. Just sit still and rest till dinner is ready. I dare say you'll be glad of a bite by this time."

Even while she spoke the woman was bustling about, putting the dishes on the table and giving an occasional stir to the great pot of meat and vegetables on the stove.

The child would have liked to put away her bundle and smooth her hair before eating, but she did not venture to ask to do so. She sat with her hands folded idly in her lap, watching her companion's brisk, jerky movements, until the children and men came trooping noisily in, clamouring for something to eat.

The mistress dished up the contents of the pot she had been stirring in large bowls, and distributed a huge slice of bread to each. She gave the lame girl a place between her own and the little blind boy, and saw that she was supplied among the first. Further than this she had no time nor thoughts to spare; the demands on her were numerous and incessant.

The hungry child dipped her bread in the savoury mess and ate a few mouthfuls, but the noise and confusion soon took away her appetite, and she placed the half-empty bowl on the table with a little sigh of mingled weariness and homesickness.

Her little companion's ears were open, though his eyes were shut. The next moment he put down his bowl too, and holding out his hand, said in a low, sweet voice,

"Wouldn't you like me to show you the room where you are to sleep? You will be quite alone there now."

The child took up her crutch and gladly followed through the broad, uncarpeted hall, and up two flights of stairs to a long, narrow room under the roof.

"It's pretty high up," said the little blind boy, in a tone of apology, "but it's quiet. No

one else sleeps here but old Granny Wicks, so I guess you'll like it better than the big room down stairs where most of the girls sleep."

"Yes, indeed," exclaimed Joy, in a tone of relief. The very idea of occupying a room with all those bold, rude girls she had seen in the yard was frightful.

"And there's a real pretty view from the back window, too," continued the child, with a pleased look, as he led her to it and then threw open the wooden shutter which did double duty against heat and cold in the utter absence of any inner window-sash.

Joy gave a quick exclamation of surprise and pleasure.

Beyond the fields and city rose her dear old purple hills, as beautiful and hazy as ever. But the sight recalled so many memories of Darry and the Bible readings on the back-door step that the unnatural composure she had so far kept up gave way, and now came the rush of pent-up feelings. Dropping on her knees by the open window, she leaned her head on the ledge and gave way to a passionate flood of tears. Her little blind companion was much distressed, and after trying in vain to comfort her with words, sat down on the

floor by her side, and putting his arms around her, literally obeyed the Bible injunction by weeping with her.

To the lonely child yearning for some one to love her such sympathy was the most soothing that could have been given. Soon her sobs ceased; lifting her head, she bestowed a grateful kiss on her little comforter.

"Poor little Joy!" said he, pressing closer, as he found his caresses were not rejected. "I'm so sorry for you. I know just how it feels, for mamma is dead too, and I am all alone in the world."

"Are you?" said Joy, in sad surprise. "Then let's you and I agree to be brother and sister, and love each other just as much as if we were born so."

The blind boy eagerly assented, and the bond of union was immediately cemented by a long conversation in which they related the experience of their past lives. Joy found to her great delight that Josy too was praying for the kingdom.

Before they went down again, the little Bible had been opened and more than one favourite chapter read aloud. Joy's heart grew calmer as the sweet keys of the prom-

ises unlocked the heavy gates of Doubting Castle and the once more recognized presence of Jesus delivered her from the cruel grasp of Giant Despair. The sad face had even a little gleam of grave light on it as hand in hand the two children descended the stairs.

CHAPTER X.

A VISIT TO THE CITY OF THE DEAD.

“Lo, I am with thee when the tomb
Thy loved ones calls away,
My voice shall cheer the valley’s gloom
With thoughts of endless day.”



AS the first morning beams lighted up the garret chamber of the poorhouse the next day, Joy awoke to the painful sense of the new life before her. For a moment the dull, heavy weight on her heart made her feel utterly desolate and alone, but the thought of her little blind friend threw a ray of comfort over the unknown future. If only she could feel sure that Darry had really been taken up to the Zion-land, as Joey seemed to think! Perhaps after they left the grave an angel had been sent to remove the earth and open the coffin. The blind boy had told her that was what the Bible said about Jesus’s grave; when the

friends went there a few days after his death, they found the big stone rolled away and two angels sitting, one at the head and one at the feet, where the body had laid.

Joy took her little Bible from under the pillow, where she had placed it for safe-keeping the previous evening, and turned over the pages trying to find the place. She could not come across that scene just at first, but as she searched her attention was arrested by the account of the raising of the widow of Nain's son.

"Ah!" thought Joy, with streaming eyes, "if Jesus had only been at our house before they carried the coffin away, perhaps he would have touched Darry and made him alive again. Maybe he has been to the graveyard, or sent the angels to take away the earth and let Darry out. I mean to go and see this very moment."

The old woman who slept in the room with her was still slumbering soundly. Softly rising, the child dressed and washed herself; then using the little crutch with great care, so as not to awaken her sleeping companion, she noiselessly went out and down the stairs.

There were voices talking in the kitchen

already. Joy stole past as quietly as she could, fearing lest she might be forbidden to go at such an early hour. Once out in the meadows in front, the little lame girl breathed more freely and quickened her steps.

The dew still rested on everything. The city below was only just rousing to its usual noise and bustle. Workmen going to and fro with dinner-pails in their hands, milkmen in their wagons, and country dealers bringing in their fresh vegetables to market, were the only persons stirring.

The cemetery lay in the outskirts of the city, not far from where the road turned off to the poorhouse. Joy knew the way well; she had several times passed there on Sundays with her brother, the little free-seat church which they had lately attended being in the immediate vicinity. Her eyes filled as she recalled the last visit, when kind neighbours bore Darry's body to its place in the great silent city of the dead. Lindy had walked beside her with the baby in her arms, weeping bitterly, and Joy's own little heart had felt as if it must break. The heavy entrance gate swung slowly back at the little girl's feeble push, and she once more found herself on the

gravelled avenue leading back into the interior of the beautiful enclosure.

Something in the mingled stillness and brightness soothed the child's aching heart as if a soft hand had passed tenderly over her brow. All the din and turmoil of rattling wheels over stony pavements, all the shrill sounds of busy toiling city life, were shut out. At that early hour not even a workman's voice was here to disturb the quiet slumbers of the silent inhabitants, only the sweet, sad note of the wood-pigeons cooing softly among the pines, or the far-away faint twitter of a belated bird who had not migrated with his wiser companions to more genial winter-quarters.

The shady entrance-way skirted for some distance a deep, wide ravine hung with delicate ferns and wild vines. A clear stream ran through the ravine, sending off, farther on, numerous little rivulets, which wound in and out under the low bushes and over the sunshiny lawns, singing soft, sweet lullabies as they passed the quiet groups of grassy mounds scattered along their way.

Far as the eye could reach these green hillsides rose and fell, while shady lanes, narrower avenues, and little footpaths trickling over the

grass branched off in all directions from the main central avenue.

The sober little feet kept on, on, past hill-side vault and stately monument and family groups of white headstones surrounded by iron railing, green hedge, or simple stone coping, on, on, by flower-strewn graves and under aromatic groves, until they came to a distant quarter appropriated exclusively to the use of the poorer classes of the community. There were comparatively few trees here, and still fewer marble slabs. Occasionally a wooden cross painted white, with black letters, or even a rough bit of board rudely carved, served to distinguish a friend's resting spot among the long irregular lines where young and old were all crowded together without reference to sex or family.

A moment later the child was standing beside the dark black mound beneath which she had seen Darry's coffin let down. Alas! the yet fresh-made grave was untouched by angel hands. No stone was rolled away from the door of that tomb.

With a sudden burst of childish passion and grief, the little sister knelt down and pressed her face to the damp, bare earth.

“Oh, Darry, Darry! My poor dear boy!”

She must have been there some time, for the first violence of the passionate storm had passed; only the low sad wail of a child who has exhausted its strength, but not its grief, came forth from the prostrate form, when all at once a deep, grave voice close at her side startled the little girl:

“My poor little child, what is the matter?”

Joy's sobs ceased, but she lay perfectly still, without answering a single word. She hoped the speaker would go away and leave her to herself if he found that she took no notice. But the next moment two gentle strong hands lifted up the astonished child and bore her unresisting to a considerable distance. Here a rustic garden-chair stood under the shade of a large maple tree.

“What is the matter?” repeated the gentleman, with a look of kind concern, as he sat down and took her on his knee.

There was something in the grave tenderness and compassion of the face bent down to hers that instantly won the little girl's confidence. Children know very quickly who are their friends.

“Oh, sir, they've put my brother Darry

down in the ground, where the angel cannot get to him."

The gentleman looked down at the distressed little face, so pale and grief-stained, and the tears started right into his eyes.

"No, little one, it is not your brother Darry that they put down there. It was only the empty house he used to live in."

Joy looked up wistfully :

"But I saw them, sir. He was drowned in the river, and they put him in a wooden box and put the box in the ground. I saw them with my very own eyes."

"Was it the eyes that saw them, little one? or were those only the little windows through which the real Joy inside looked out on what was done to Darry's empty house?"

"Are there two Darrys?" asked the child, looking puzzled.

"Was the brother they put in the coffin, who could neither speak to you nor hear you when you spoke to him, the same Darry you knew before that time?"

The little lame girl gave him a quick, earnest glance, and shook her head.

He waited a moment, then went on: "My little girl, our bodies are only the earthly

houses where we live while in this world. The eyes and ears and mouth and hands and feet are all parts of this house, but it is the soul inside that makes them active and useful. The soul is the person. When God calls that out, the body becomes helpless and dead, a mere empty shell which men lay away in some safe, quiet spot to rest till it shall again be needed."

"Then where is Darry?" asked Joy, eagerly—"the real inside Darry, sir?"

A shadow swept over her companion's face.

"Little one," he asked, gently, "did Darry know and love the Lord Jesus?"

"Oh yes," said she, with simple earnestness. The keen eyes watching her so gravely flashed with quick pleasure:

"Then Darry has gone away to live with Jesus in his bright, beautiful home above."

"Then the angel did come for him!" exclaimed Joy, in a tone of glad surprise. "Please, sir, how do you know?"

He smiled a little, and putting his hand in his coat pocket, still keeping one arm tenderly around her, drew out a small pocket Psalms and Testament.

"Look here, little one;" and he showed Joy a verse:

"For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."

"What does that mean?" said Joy, doubtfully.

"It means death, little one. When the body-house falls to pieces, then the real soul-person who lives in it has another room in the heavenly Father's house which shall last for ever if he is only one to whom Jesus has given the victory."

Joy studied the words again, and then looked up and nodded gravely:

"Then the angel just took the real Darry out of the body-house and up, up to the far-away Zion-land? But I should think Darry would want his body-house even up there," she added, knitting her brows and thinking very hard.

"He will have it some day, my child. The Bible has something to say about that too."

He turned over some leaves and gave her two or three different passages to read—passages which have consoled many mourning hearts:

“Jesus said unto Martha, Thy brother shall rise again.

“Martha said unto him, I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day.

“Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die.”

“Now if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen.

“But now is Christ risen from the dead and become the first fruits of them that slept. For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.”

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which, according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not

away, reserved in heaven for you who are kept by the power of God, through faith unto salvation."

"And I saw the dead, both small and great, stand before God: and the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them."

"After this I beheld, and lo, a great multitude which no man could number, of all nations and kindred and people and tongues, stood before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes and palms in their hands; and cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne and unto the Lamb."

"You see, little Joy, to those who trust Jesus what men call death is but the gate of a fuller, higher life."

Joy looked down at the little Bible and then up into his face with a half smile,—a lighting up of the whole face so intelligent and glad that the gentleman felt she had caught the true meaning of the verses, and that it would bring consolation.

He waited a moment, for he saw her little heart was full, then he asked gently and kindly, "My little child, will you trust yourself to

Jesus's care, now that your brother is taken from you?"

The child hesitated and looked up wistfully with trembling lips:

"Please, sir, why could I not go too? It's so very, very lonely without Darry."

And hiding her face against the kind arm that held her, she burst into a fresh agony of tears and sobbed as if her little heart would break. This fit of weeping did her more good than the former one; the sting of death had gone, it was the separation that grieved her now; the first had exhausted both mind and body, this, on the contrary, relieved the aching pain.

The stranger held her closely, and was silent for a little, until the sobs grew less.

"Hush, my child," he said, in a low, tender voice which somehow calmed her like a spell. "Darry is with his Saviour now; he has 'seen the King in his beauty in the land which is very far off.' All the rough, hard places and trials of life are past, and he is at rest where there is no more tears, nor sickness, nor pain. You would not wish him back again for more of these?"

"No, oh no!" sobbed the child, "but it

seems so lonely and aching inside. No one cares for me now, like Darry."

"Jesus cares, little child," he said, in tones which were encouragement itself. "He will never leave or forsake you, little child, and his presence can make sunshine in the most empty and gloomy heart. I would rather have his protecting arms around me than any others in the whole universe, and so will you, my little girl, when you have learned to know him better."

"But he is not so real and near as Darry used to be," said Joy, with an appealing look.

"Ah, perhaps it was to let you find out what a mistake that is that he took away Darry. The Lord will be King in each heart, and sometimes he empties life of all else that we may learn to rest on him alone for comfort and joy, and the brightness Jesus will bring is something wonderful if only we are willing to let all else go and pray, 'Thy kingdom come.'"

The quiet tears were still rolling down Joy's cheeks, and the swelling in her throat made speech impossible, but a little faint gleam of a smile lit up the pale face. Was this one way the kingdom was to come in the heart?

"My little girl," said the gentleman, in that same quiet, soothing voice, "the Lord Jesus is standing knocking at the door of your heart. Lift up the gate and let that King of glory enter, then, never mind what gloom and storms may be without, all within will be bright and calm and peace. Will you take the Friend who sticketh closer than a brother to be your guide and portion?"

"Oh yes!"

"Then, shall we ask him now?" asked he, gently.

The child nodded gravely; kneeling down on the grass under the maple tree, the gentleman sent up a short, childlike petition on Joy's behalf.

When they rose up, he still held her hand and said, in a moved tone,

"Will you come now a little distance and see a place that is very precious to me?"

Joy took up the little crutch and went with him across a broad piece of unoccupied ground, and up a gently ascending footpath under a pine grove, till they reached a sloping terrace overhanging the wild ravine near the entrance gate.

Evergreens of great size and beauty were

skilfully grouped around, the grass was thick and carefully cut, otherwise Nature had been left to have pretty much her own way, and a very sweet, wild spot she had made just here.

The gentleman crossed the grass and stopped by the side of two freshly-sodded mounds, one rather long and headed by a beautiful marble cross; the other short, with only a tiny head slab. There was lettering carved on each. Joy let go the gentleman's hand, and kneeling down by the side of the smaller grave, read the words on the little headstone first:

"Jamie Gordon, aged four years and six months. Jesus said, Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven."

On the cross was carved:

"In memory of Janet Gordon, aged twenty-seven years.

"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."

The gentleman stood by until the child had finished reading and rose to her feet. Then he held out his hand and drew her to his side:

"My little girl, those are the graves of my wife and baby-boy. Ten days ago they were

both alive, making my home bright and full of love. Now they have gone to Jesus, and I too am left to journey on through the rest of life alone."

Joy pressed the hand she held in silent sympathy, and raised a pair of soft, tear-filled eyes to the dark, moistened ones looking down on hers.

"My little child, I too know what it is to have an aching, lonely heart, and yet, during these ten sad days, Jesus has so come and filled it that I can now truly say,

'Alone I journey on my Lord to meet,
My thoughts and meditations yet so sweet
Of Him on whom I lean, my strength, my stay,
I almost can forget the sorrows of the way.'

The quiet voice trembled a little, however, and there was a far-away, longing look in the grave eyes that showed the sorrows had reached very deep in the strong, manly nature.

"With joy and gladness they have been brought and entered into the king's palace. We cannot help rejoicing for them, little one, and as for ourselves, let the prayer of our hearts be, 'that like as we do believe our Lord Jesus Christ to have ascended into the heavens, so we may also in heart and

mind thither ascend, and with him continually dwell.' ”

“It is not safe for either of us to remain here longer, my little girl,” he said, kindly, after a moment’s silence. “We must both go home now. Where do you live?”

A blush suffused the child’s pale cheeks as she answered low,

“At the poorhouse, sir.”

And she looked up into his face with a little doubt.

But he put his hand on her shoulder, and looking down with a grave, moved smile, said gently,

“Well, little one, if only Jesus lives with you there, it may be a very happy home.”

The child’s face brightened, and as she walked by his side to the entrance gate she told him of Darry’s death and the little blind boy who had promised to be her friend.

At the gate they parted, but first Mr. Gordon held Joy’s hand closely in his and asked gravely,

“Will you and little Joey eat Thanksgiving dinner with me to-morrow? We have much to give thanks for, and perhaps we can best do it together.”

Joy's eyes sparkled.

"Oh, thank you, sir!" she said, gratefully;
"I should like it so much."

Mr. Gordon wrote his address on a card and with a kind smile put it into her hand.


"Come early, little one, and if I am not at home, go in and wait."

And then Joy went home for her breakfast and dinner both in one, and told Joey all about what the gentleman had said, and of the kind invitation for the next day.

CHAPTER XI.

THE DELECTABLE MOUNTAINS.

"Thus He who is himself the gift and giver,
The future glory and the present smile,
With the bright promise of the glad for ever,¹
Can light the shadows of the little while."

HE two children started a little before noon the next day for the house of Joy's stranger-friend. It was a bleak November day. Keen, searching blasts swept through the delicate network of branch and spray, sending down little twigs and battered shreds of dead foliage, or stirred the neatly-collected piles of dead leaves along the sidewalk, starting off a half a dozen on a quick little run across the broad street.

Hand in hand they toddled on, till in one of the quiet side avenues they came to the number on the card the gentleman had given as a direction.

"67, Chestnut avenue; this must be the house, Joey." Joy pushed open the gate and led her blind companion up the smooth gravel walk to a large stone cottage standing somewhat back from the street amid a pretty little lawn and shrubberies.

A ring at the bell quickly brought a pleasant-faced Irish girl to the door.

"Please, does Mr. Gordon live here?"

"Yes, but he's not back from church yet. I suppose you are the two children he expects to dinner?"

"Yes, ma'am; he told us to come early," said Joy, in a tone of apology.

"Oh, it's all right; the master thought you might be here before he returned, and left word you were to amuse yourselves in the library. He'll be here soon, now."

She opened the door wide for them to enter, and then helped them off with their outer garments, which she hung on the hall-rack. It was a square hall, furnished with two or three old-fashioned oak chairs and some fine engravings; no stairs were in sight, but opposite the front door two glass ones stood wide open, leading into a small conservatory. Beyond was a mass of green and colour which

perfumed the whole house with aromatic sweetness.

Joy gazed with wide-open eyes at the gorgeous array of strange tropical plants as the woman led them through the conservatory to an inner apartment fitted up in the modern library style, with low bookcases, heavy centre writing-table, and richly-carved black walnut furniture.

Pictures, busts, and a pleasant wood-fire blazing cheerily away on shining brass and-irons gave a bright, homelike look to the room, and indicated a refined, educated taste in the possessor.

The woman brought forward some books of engravings, and placing two low chairs in front of the fire, bade the children warm and amuse themselves till the master came in.

As soon as they were left alone, Joy began to describe everything to the little blind boy, her single pair of eyes doing service for both.

An open piano at one corner of the room puzzled her somewhat as to its possible use, but on hearing her description her companion started up with a look of great pleasure, and insisted upon being led to touch the white keys.

"Mamma had one," he said, running his hands lightly over the board, and awakening sounds that surprised and delighted Joy. "She used to give lessons, and played beautifully—oh, beautifully! She taught me two or three tunes, but it's so long since the piano was sold I'm afraid I have forgotten them."

"Do try," urged Joy.

And after two or three attempts Joey managed to play the "Bluebells of Scotland" and "Hail Columbia" in a style that awakened the little girl's wondering admiration.

"It's perfectly lovely! I wonder if the gentleman plays on it, or if his wife did?"

"I mean to ask him," said the blind boy. "Perhaps he can play some of mamma's tunes. I should love to hear them dearly."

"I guess that's a picture of his wife over the mantel-piece," said Joy as they went back to their seats. "She's a lovely lady, with long curly hair about her face, and such laughing eyes that seem to follow you all around the room. And she has got the darlindest little baby-boy you ever saw on her lap."

"I wish I could see her," said Joey, with a little sigh. "It's almost like fairy-land here, is it not, Joy?"

"It's like the Delectable Mountains," replied Joy, gravely. "Don't you remember how beautiful they were?"

The blind boy had never heard of Pilgrim's journey, however, and listened eagerly to Joy's account of his dangers and adventures. From this the talk branched off in many a side avenue, and the time slipped by unperceived by either, until, in answer to a remark of the little girl, she was startled considerably by the deep, rich tones of another voice than Joey's:

"Not alone, little one! Jesus never leaves us alone, unless our choice is not to have his company."

Joy turned quickly, with a little flush of joy: "Oh, please, sir, where did you come from?"

The gentleman laughed a little, and presently held out his hand to the blind boy:

"So this is Joey, is it? I'm glad to see you, my little man."

Joy leaned against his knee, and looked up with pleased eyes into the kind, grave face:

"Please, sir, did we come too early? We always have dinner at twelve o'clock at the poorhouse."

"Not too early, my little girl. I should have been here sooner if I had not been de-

tained by a sick man. How did it happen you and Joey were not at church?"

"We thought they only had church on Sundays," replied the child, in a surprised tone.

"There is always church on Thanksgiving-day, to give thanks for all the kindness the heavenly Father has shown us during the past year."

"Oh, Joy and I have been doing that at home," said the blind boy, lifting his sightless eyes with a bright smile.

"And how many things have you found to give thanks for, my little man?"

"Four," answered the child, readily, "and Joy has counted five."

"Let me hear what they are," said Mr. Gordon, sitting down and putting an arm around each.

"First, Jesus is my Saviour," said the blind boy, putting down one finger on the gentleman's knee. "Second," putting down another, "he's getting ready a place for me near mamma's in the happy land. Third, I'm thankful Joy has come to live at the poorhouse; and fourth, 'cause you asked me to dinner."

"And now, little Joy, let us hear your

special mercies ;” and her friend put his hand upon her head gently.

“Joey is going to be my brother,—that’s one. You asked us both to dinner,—two. Darry’s not down in the ground, but up in the Zion-land,—three. I’ve got a whole Bible and a Pilgrim’s Progress, all my own,—four. And Jesus is bringing the kingdom into my heart and getting a place ready for me in the kingdom,—five. That’s all ;” and the child looked thoughtfully from the five bent fingers of the right hand to her questioner’s face.

“A whole handful of mercies, little one ;” and a grave smile, full of kindliness and tender sympathy, lightened the sober countenance as he spoke. “Has the little heart-kingdom grown any brighter since yesterday morning, my child ?”

“Jesus has been saying, ‘I’m sorry for you, poor little Joy ; open the door wide, and I’ll stay with you all the time till the angel comes,’” replied the child, soberly. “That ’most takes the ache away.”

“Ah, little one, only lonely, bleeding hearts shut up to Jesus can know the healing power of that presence as an abiding Comforter. When all goes well with us we are apt to for-

get Jesus. There's balm in Gilead if only we did but seek it more trustfully.

"Has Joey learned Joy's prayer yet?"

The blind boy hesitated as if in doubt; the grave eyes watched him curiously, but their owner did not speak, neither did the child at once.

"You see, sir, I always thought the kingdom meant up in the skies with mamma. I never asked the Lord Jesus to come down and make a little kingdom in me, as Joy does," he replied, slowly, after a few moments' troubled consideration.

"Do you know now, my boy, that the great kingdom of glory is the gathering together of numberless little spirit-kingdoms, and that when we pray 'thy kingdom come' it is first of all Jesus's presence in our hearts we ask for?"

Joey nodded soberly.

"Would you not like Jesus to come and live with you, Joey, making your body a little temple of the Holy Spirit?"

The child smiled brightly:

"Please, sir, I think he has come; only I did not know that was what the kingdom meant."

"Then will you and Joy try to bring the kingdom to other hearts?"

"Please, sir, how can we?"

And Joy lifted her eyes with a questioning glance.

"By living such lovely, holy lives that those who see you will glorify your Father which is in heaven; by acting the part of little torch-bearers in this sin-darkened world, telling others all around what a dear Saviour you have found in Jesus; above all, by praying earnestly that Christ's kingdom may be advanced all over the world. Will you do this, little ones?"

"I'll try, sir," said the blind boy, earnestly, and although Joy's tongue said nothing, her eyes did, and their friend looked satisfied.

"Please, sir, dinner is ready," said the pleasant-faced girl, making her appearance in the doorway.

Taking a hand of each, the kind host led his little guests across the conservatory to a light, cheery dining-room, where a table was spread for three. The display of white table-linen, glass, silver, and flowers, though perfectly simple and quiet, seemed wonderful to Joy's unaccustomed eyes. The blind boy

could only smell the flowers and hear the cool trickling of the ice in the goblets, but the nicely prepared fowls and vegetables were a great treat to both after the plain, homely fare of the poorhouse. Mr. Gordon ate sparingly himself, but took good care that his little companions did full justice to the dinner and had a plentiful supply of the pudding and fruit dessert. If to see the vacant places at his table thus supplied made his own heart ache, his brow was kept unclouded, and though there might be a sober tinge to both words and smiles, neither was wanting to shed a tender cheerfulness all through the meal. No personal feeling was allowed to cloud the children's Thanksgiving treat, and so skilfully and pleasantly did he draw them out that very soon they were chatting as freely as if they had known him all their lives.

By the time dinner was over and they again gathered around the library fire, a faint flush of pleasure had driven away the shadow from Joy's brow, while the blind boy's sweet countenance sparkled with rosy satisfaction.

"Now, little ones, what shall I do to amuse you?" asked the kind host, with a cheerful

smile. "Shall I show you my pictures or teach you a game of parlour ninepins?"

"Please, sir, tell us a story," suggested Joey, raising his sightless eyes with an entreating look. "I could not see the pictures or roll the balls straight."

"What shall the story be about, my little man?" asked the gentleman, with a compassionate expression on his fine face.

The boy considered a moment.

"Please, sir, do you know any story about heaven?"

Mr. Gordon hesitated; a look of great pain, suddenly stirred, swept across his face as he raised his eyes and fixed them mournfully on the lovely face smiling down from above the marble mantel. Then, with a smothered sigh, he turned back to the waiting children:

"Shall I tell you about a little German boy's dream and the lesson it taught him?"

Both of the eager children begged him to do so; accordingly, he began and told the following story.

"HANS'S VISIT TO HEAVEN."

"German Hans was a little hunchback whose parents had died on the vessel which brought

them from Germany, leaving their orphan son to make his own way in a foreign land far away from his native home and relatives. He was a bright, active boy of a dozen years or so, and soon acquired the language sufficiently to enable him to peddle pins, needles, thread, hair pins, and other such simple articles through the streets of New York city. These articles and the basket in which they were held he obtained from a small fancy-shop on commission,—that is, he was allowed to take them out during the day, sell what he could for a few cents more than the shop-people charged, and then, at night, return the basket and the price of what he had sold. By this means he usually earned enough pennies during the day to pay for two or three scanty meals and a night's lodging on the floor of an Irish woman's attic. As he was all alone in the world and his deformity often made him the sport of cruel men and boys, he frequently became sad and discouraged, especially when, after walking up and down all day long, rain or shine, he made so little that even the necessary penny extra which he paid for his floor-bed was missing. At such times he was forced to seek shelter wherever it could be found without price:

sometimes under the front steps of a basement entrance; sometimes in an empty dry-goods box left in front of a store: just the snuggest corner that turned up about bed-time.

“The poor orphan foreigner knew little about Jesus and the happy land until one Sunday afternoon, as he wandered disconsolately down the street, the sound of singing caught his ear. Like most of his countrymen, Hans was extravagantly fond of music, so he joined himself to the crowd fast gathering around a little group of young men standing on a corner just where the tide of passers-by was strongest.

“When the hymn was finished, one of the gentlemen raised himself on the edge of the nearest lamp-post, and holding fast with one arm, began talking to the motley audience in clear, ringing tones which reached even the outer edge of the group where Hans stood. His theme was the Father’s house, its joy and peace and glory, the love of the dear Elder Brother, the Prince of that land of beauty, and the service he asks of each of his servants while waiting for the summons home. The speaker was a noted and popular street-preacher, and his words came home with great

power to more than one heart that day. Hans never forgot that sermon, nor the hymn and short prayer which followed. He bought a Bible in German, going supperless to bed for several weeks to save the money; and he read and pondered so much about that bright, tearless home during the day-time that at length visions of its beauty began to be mingled in his night-fancies. It was so comforting, after a weary, discouraging day, to rest on the thought of a place where even for the poor stranger there was a Friend and a welcome, a home where cold and hunger and sorrow never came, full of white robes, starlit crowns, and never-ceasing music.

“It was Christmas eve. The brilliantly-lighted streets were thronged with warmly-clad people, and the gay shop-windows were filled with holiday goods to tempt those who had full purses and plenty of friends. The scene was a bright, joyous one, full of pleasant bustle and happy greetings. But poor Hans was neither merry nor light-footed. It had been a bad day for him. Up and down, up and down, he had gone through the weary hours, offering his best wares to every passer-by. Nobody had pennies to spare for the

homely articles in the hunchback's basket; they were all wanted for Christmas toys and gifts, and so the little thread-and-needle merchant had barely cleared enough to buy a piece of stale bread and a herring for his dinner. He must go supperless and seek a shelter that cost nothing.

"Up and down, up and down, he went with the despised wares, thinking over the happy Christmas eves in his far-away German home, until his heart grew so heavy and the tired feet so weary that he could stand it no longer. He gave up in despair and carried the basket back to the shop, and then began to search for a sleeping-place.

"As he strolled up the crowded street he would once in a while stand arrested before the marvellous display of some plate-glass window, or eyed wistfully the tempting-looking turkeys and immense joints of meat in the gayly-illuminated butcher-shops, all decked out with ribbons and Christmas greens. It was too cold for the doorstep, and no empty box could he find; for nearly an hour he hunted for a suitable place in vain.

"Up and down, and up again, the tired feet kept on, until at length they found themselves

in a broad, quiet avenue lined with rows of pleasant brownstone dwellings. Many of the wooden shutters were still unclosed for the night. Looking in from the damp and darkness without, the weary lad caught many a tempting glimpse of warmth and holiday cheer, handsome furniture, soft carpets, mirrors, pictures, flowers, and books; above all, happy, loving faces.

“Once, especially, the chilled, homesick child gazed long and wistfully. The bright, firelit room within was hung with long wreaths of evergreens, and in the centre stood a tall spruce tree blazing with wax tapers and crystal balls, and loaded with choice Christmas gifts. A merry home-group—grandparents, father and mother, uncles, aunts, and a flock of bright-faced children—had gathered around; and then came faintly out the sweet notes of a piano, as one of the aunts played the accompaniment to a lively Christmas carol and the voices of young and old joined in. How like a fairy scene it seemed to lonely Hans! contrasting so sadly with the gloom and solitude of the cold street without.

“Reluctantly he turned away. A light in an alley just back attracted his attention. It

was a coachman standing, lantern in hand, at the open door of his stable, where he had been making his horses comfortable for the night. The broad, good-natured face was so encouraging that Hans drew near and begged that he might be allowed to pass the night under the same roof with the horses.

"The man hesitated a little; something in the pale, sad face appealed strongly to his heart, which was not a hard one:

" 'Well, I suppose it will not do to say No, seeing as how it's Christmas eve. But you'll have to stay locked in till I have finished my breakfast to-morrow morning.'

"Hans eagerly assented to this, and quickly mounted the ladder the man pointed out, leading up to the loft above. The next moment the door was locked and Hans and the horses were left alone in the dark.

"A round glass window above the entrance let in, however, a faint glimmer of light, revealing the loft to be low and full of hay. Occasionally through the broken panes a little evening breeze came in on an exploring expedition, stirring the hay lightly, so as to draw out a sweet scent that quite filled the room. Hans hollowed out a nest in the hay near the

window, and with a long sigh of mingled satisfaction and weariness drew some more hay over him for a blanket.

“ ‘What a jolly place this is!’ he soliloquized. ‘A sight nicer than Granny O’Brien’s dirty floor. I wish that man would let me sleep here every night.’ ”

“Now, as he lay there gazing out at the starry sky, this is what happened to him,—Hans insists before his eyes were closed, but I think he made a mistake there, don’t you?”

“Please, sir, what did happen?” asked Joey, earnestly.

The gentleman looked down at the two eager, upturned faces with a little smile.

“Hans says the two brightest stars suddenly came nearer and nearer, until they proved to be the soft, pitying eyes of a beautiful angel dressed in a long fleecy cloud robe, with two large cloud-wings, which kept up an incessant flapping as she bent lovingly over him: then a sweet, silvery voice said in his very ear,

“ ‘Little Hans, will you go with me to spend Christmas day with the angel children in the great Father’s house above?’ ”

“Hans stretched out his hands eagerly; the next instant he found himself rising from the

day and gently wafted up and up until the great city slumbering below grew shadowy and indistinct—even the tall domes and spires were left far behind—yet such was his confidence in the gentle guardian's care that, resting securely in those loving arms, he looked down from the giddy height without a sensation of fear. Up, up they continued to rise until a sound of sweet music came floating down, at first faint and distant, but all the time growing louder and nearer. Soon the twinkling stars were seen to be an immense company of white-robed, bright-eyed angels singing Christmas carols of 'Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, good-will to men.' The ranks parted to let them pass through, and the next moment the angel stopped before an open pearly gate, beyond which lay a long, golden-paved street flooded with a soft, wonderful radiance. On either side the gate stood a shining warden guarding the entrance.

"'Oh how beautiful!' and Hans looked wistfully up into the lovely face of his guide.

"But the angel only smiled back, and giving the watchword, 'The Lamb who was slain and hath redeemed us with his blood,' essayed to enter.

“But the gate-guardians shook their heads, saying gently, but firmly, ‘Only the death messenger can bring in a mortal here without special permit.’ ‘It is the Prince’s command,’ was the quick reply. Instantly they bowed reverently and made way, and the angel bore Hans through to the other side.

“In either direction from the golden-paved avenue stretched swelling fields of green, watered by the several branches of a river clear as crystal, apparently starting from the same central point whence the glorious effulgence which took the place of sun and moon had its focus. Along the tree-shaded banks multitudes of white-robed beings were passing to and fro, and surging across from that same central point came the sound of music, the voice of harpers harping constantly, of silver trumpets and stringed instruments; now the sweet, clear note of a single throat, silvery and pure; anon the swelling chorus of the great multitude, as of many waters and of mighty thunderings, saying: ‘Alleluia, for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.’

“The angel bore Hans down towards a lovely river-side garden where a number of merry children were playing together. The

little hunchback shrunk from leaving the angel's arms lest his uncouth figure should expose him to ridicule, but as if the angel guessed the unspoken thought, she bade him look at his reflection in the clear water as they passed. The face was his, but the pure white garments and erect figure which had replaced the every-day worn suit and deformed person seemed to belong to somebody else. But to his great delight, when he put up his hand to feel, the hunch was really gone.

"The angel beckoned one of the nearest children, who instantly obeyed the summons without an impatient word or frown.

"'Angelchen,' said the sweet, silvery voice, 'the Prince permits you the pleasure of helping this little earth-boy enjoy his Christmas in heaven. On earth he is a little hunchback without friends or home, so you must do your best to make him happy while he stays.'

"Then the angel-boy took Hans kindly by the hand and led him back to his companions, who all came running to welcome him to their charming playground. The hours that followed were as a joyous dream to the stranger-guest. He played merrily with the children; he gathered fruit and flowers as freely as he

pleased; he joined in the beautiful songs they sung, or wandered around with the angel-boy under whose special care he had been placed, viewing so many wondrous and lovely scenes that he almost grew dizzy with pleasure.

“‘Are we not ’most through?’ he asked, at length, as the two threw themselves down on the bank to enjoy the distant music and chat.

“‘Oh no! You cannot begin to see even a tiny corner in a single day,’ replied the other, with a joyous, silvery little laugh. ‘I myself have only just begun to find out what a beautiful place it is, and I have been here more than fifty years, as we counted time on earth. Yet I am only one of the little ones, but those who have been here the longest say the same thing.’

“‘Is it so very, very large?’ said Hans, in great amazement.

“‘Oh, very, and so full of joy and beauty that one never tires. Even the birds sing sweeter and the flowers are far more lovely than on earth, and then they never fade.’

“‘Are you never cold nor hungry nor sad?’

“‘Never, oh never. Those who dwell in the Father’s house hunger no more, neither

thirst any more, neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of water, and God shall wipe all tears from their eyes.'

" 'And how do your clothes keep so white and shiny? Do they never get soiled and torn?'

" 'Our robes are washed and made white in the blood of the Lamb, and nothing in any wise enters in here that defileth.'

" 'And do you never go to church? What do you do all day long, and where do you sleep when night comes?'

" 'There is no need of a church, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple here. He that sits on the throne dwells among us; thus we serve him all the time in his temple. Everything we do or enjoy is a sort of service, because in all he is first in our thoughts and affections. Daily we see his face; his name is in our foreheads. And there is no night here; we need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the glory of God giveth continual brightness, and the Lamb is the light of the whole city.'

" 'Do you have any work to do?' asked

Hans, in some doubt, as he eyed the childish face and form.

“ ‘Yes ; even the youngest has a special service appointed him. Would you like to see how I am permitted to serve the king ?’

“ Hans assented, and the angel-child led the way outside the city gates, which always stood open ; pointing down, he bade his companion stoop and look.

“ Instantly the distance seemed annihilated. Far beneath lay a large oriental garden where the thirsty flowers drooped their heads under the heat of a tropical sun. ‘That is a wee bit of earth in Africa which has been put under my care. Every morning and evening I sprinkle the plants with dew, and see that all the birds and fishes and animals have their daily food. Not the tiniest birdling falls to the ground without the heavenly Father’s notice. And sometimes I am sent down to minister to some of his dear earth-children.’

“ Hans drew a long breath as they again passed in through the gates. A moment after his heart began to beat quickly, for there drew near the place where they were standing a figure so bright and glorious that his eyes were dazzled by the vision even before the

lovely, majestic face was near enough to be seen.

“‘It is the King’s Son, our dear Elder Brother!’ cried the angel-child, running joyfully to pay him homage.

“But in spite of his pure white robe and erect form, Hans felt so simple and unworthy that he hung back, not daring to approach till the Prince tenderly spoke his name :

“‘Hans, my little Hans! It is I, be not afraid.’

“Then Hans ran quickly, and kneeling down, pressed his lips in childish abandon and reverent affection where the nail prints had left a scar on those dear white feet.

“But stooping down, the Saviour Prince raised him in his arms, and wiping away the tears of mingled joy and grief, said softly,

“‘Little Hans, will you come and live with me by and by in the Father’s house?’

“‘Oh yes, dear Master, if I may,’ said Hans, gratefully. ‘But such a weak, sinful child as I is not fit to live here.’

“‘You shall be washed pure in my blood, little Hans. My name shall be written on your forehead; for my sake the Father will make you welcome. But first you must go

back for a time to the cold and hardships and loneliness of the old earth-life. Are you willing to do this for my sake, little Hans?’

“‘Yes, to please thee, dear Prince,’ murmured Hans, softly.

“‘It need not be lonely any longer, little Hans,’ said those same low, tender tones of love and sympathy. ‘The very hairs of your head are all numbered; not one unnecessary sorrow or trial shall touch you, and before very long the place will be made ready for you, and my strong, good angel Death shall be sent to bring you home again. Till then fear not, little Hans; lo, I am with you always even to the end.’

“‘Dear Master,’ pleaded Hans, earnestly, ‘give me some work to do for thee while waiting, that the time may not seem so long.’

“The Master smiled lovingly down on the little child in his arms:

“‘Your first work, little Hans, must be to guard your heart as a sacred shrine from all that is wrong and impure. Open the door wide that I, its King, may enter in. Henceforth your life is hid with me. Then as you go about the great city below, so dark with sin and sorrow, act the part of a torch-bearer;

tell all your voice can reach of this beautiful Father's house and how I love them ; especially help the dear children to come to me.'

"The Master's voice died away, and Hans suddenly awoke to find the morning sun streaming brightly through the loft window. Yet as he lay wonderingly amid the sweet-scented hay, those soft, tender tones still rang in his heart, 'Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end.'"

The gentleman ceased speaking ; for a while the flames flickering brightly in the fireplace and the softly-dropping ashes had it all their own way. Then Mr. Gordon spoke.

"Little Joy," he asked, with an affectionate pressure of the arm which encircled her, "can you say you are 'all alone' when Jesus is with you?"

The child's eyes glistened as she looked up and shook her head.

"Please, sir," asked the blind boy, "did Hans tell people about Jesus and the Father's house after that?"

"I believe he did, my boy. At least he told the person who told me."

A grave, tender look came over the gentleman's face as he looked sadly at the sweet one

smiling down upon the little group from over the mantel.

"Was it that lady who told you, sir?" asked Joy, timidly.

"Yes, my little girl, it was she. Crossing on one of the ferry boats which run between Jersey City and New York, she noticed a little hunchback boy with his basket whose face interested her so much that she sat down beside him and entered into conversation. Some sympathizing remarks led him to reply, with a bright smile, 'Never mind, lady; some day I shall have wings and fly away to the Father's house.' He told her his dream after that, and when she returned home, she wrote it out for the benefit of some of her little nieces and nephews."

"Did Hans really believe he went to heaven and saw all these things?" asked the blind boy, thoughtfully.

The gentleman smiled gravely:

"He told my wife it all seemed just as real as if he had been, and, at any rate, it was the Saviour Prince who had sent the dream, if not the angel."

"Do you think the Father's house is just like it was in the dream, sir?"

"I don't know exactly what it is like, my dear little boy ; I only am sure of one thing,—that when we get there we shall see Jesus and be perfectly satisfied. All the joy and beauty of earth is worthless in comparison."

Joy gave a soft little sigh.

"My little child," said Mr. Gordon, lifting her face so that he could look right in her wistful eyes, "you and I must be content to wait patiently till it is the Master's good pleasure to call us home too. But if we want the time to pass quickly and happily, we must find some work to do for Jesus while we are waiting."

Joy's lip quivered, but she asked, earnestly, "What am I to do, sir?"

"They also serve who only stand and wait," little one. Wait on the Lord for your work, as for everything else. Ask, and it shall be given ; seek, and you will find something."

And then for some time the talk went on—of that land again where sorrow and death is unknown ; of the friends awaiting them there ; of the vast company of earth-pilgrims journeying toward it ; of the glory of the King and the joy of his service even here ; of the abiding peace which his presence alone can

bring;—till thought grew too full for words, and silence again stole over the little group.

Thus the short November afternoon drew near its close, and twilight came on. But before the children left, the blind boy asked their kind host to play on the piano for them. After playing and singing several other things he ended with the beautiful English version of Bernard de Cheny's grand Latin hymn on heaven :

“ Brief life is here our portion,
Brief sorrow, short-lived care :
The life that knows no ending,
The tearless life, is there.
O happy retribution,
Short toil, eternal rest !
For mortals and for sinners,
A mansion with the blest !

“ O one, O only mansion !
O paradise of joy !
Where tears are ever banished
And smiles have no alloy :
There all the halls of Zion
For aye shall be complete,
And in the land of beauty
All things of beauty meet.

“ For thee, O dear, dear country !
Mine eyes their vigils keep :

For very joy, beholding
Thy happy name, they weep ;
The mention of thy glory
Is unction to the breast,
And medicine in sickness,
And love and life and rest.

“ Beside thy living waters
All plants are great and small—
The cedar of the forest,
The hyssop of the wall ;
With jaspers glow thy bulwarks,
Thy streets with emeralds blaze ;
The sardius and the topaz
Unite in thee their rays.

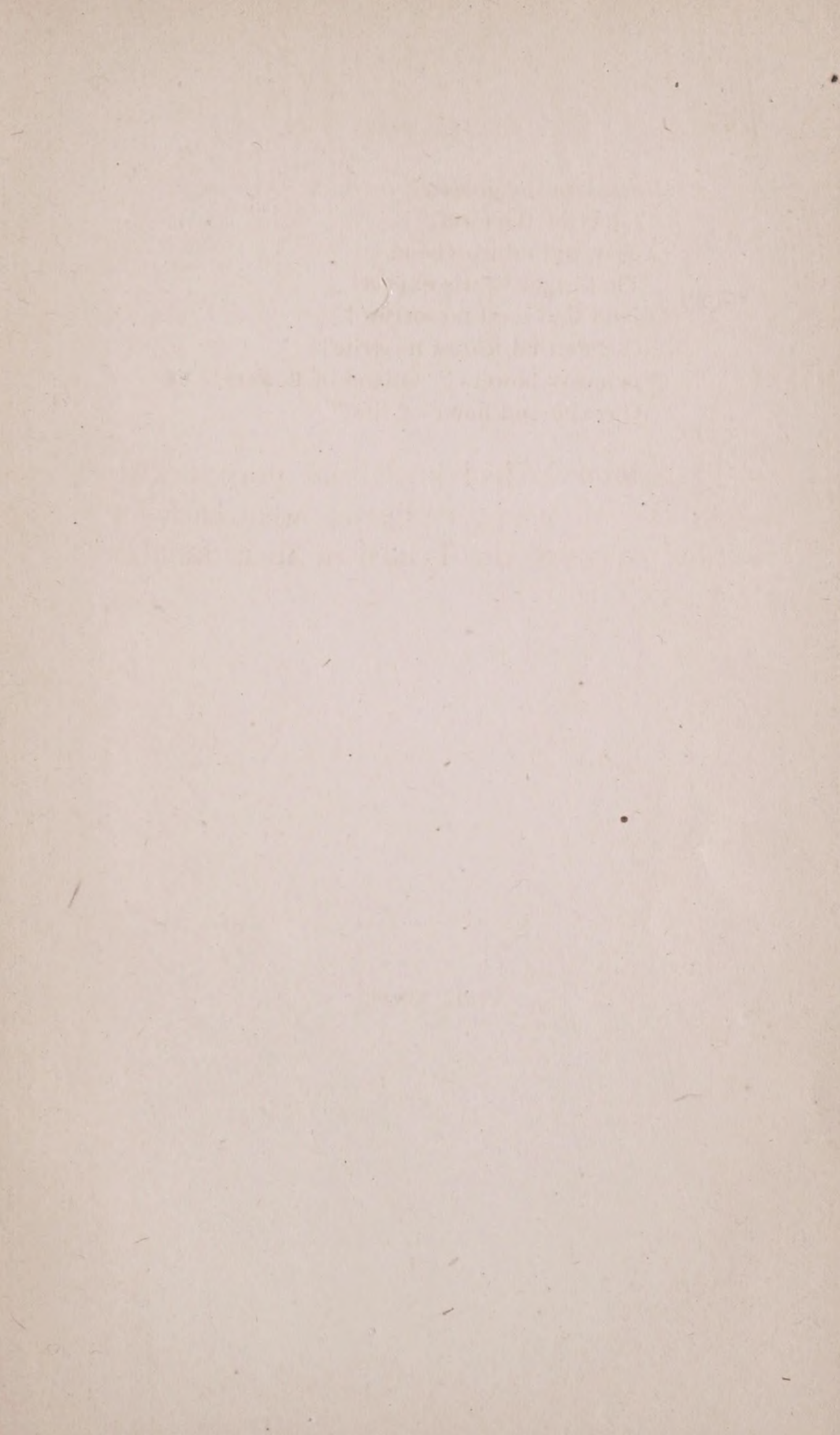
“ Thy ageless walls are bounded
With amethyst unpriced ;
Thy saints build up its fabric,
The corner-stone is Christ ;
Thou hast no shore, fair ocean !
Thou hast no time, bright day !
Dear fountain of refreshment
To pilgrims far away.

“ They stand, those walls of Zion,
Conjubilant with song,
And bright with many an angel
And many a martyr throng ;
The Prince is ever with them,
The light is aye serene ;
The pastures of the blessed
Are decked in glorious sheen.

“Jerusalem the golden !
Glory of the elect,
O dear and future vision
That eager hearts expect !
O land that seest no sorrow !
O state that fearest no strife !
O princely bowers ! O land of flowers !
O realm and home of life !”

Then, after he had knelt and prayed with them, the two younger pilgrims went back for a time to serve the Prince in their humble home.

THE END.





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